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**RELIGIOUS AND  
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Religious and moral ideas in  
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# **Biblical and Oriental Series**

SAMUEL A. B. MERCER, General Editor

## RELIGIOUS AND MORAL IDEAS IN BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

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# RELIGIOUS AND MORAL IDEAS IN BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

By

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MOREHOUSE PUBLISHING CO.  
MILWAUKEE, WIS.  
A. R. MOWBRAY & CO.  
LONDON



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1919



TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
SIR HENRY RAWLINSON  
PIONEER ASSYRIOLOGIST



## PREFACE

The names of mighty Babylon and proud Assyria will never be forgotten, and their memory will never cease among men. So long as modern civilization lasts; so long as Christianity sways men's hearts; and so long as the Bible is read, Babylonia and Assyria, Nineveh and Babylon will be names to conjure with. The excavations begun in the mounds of the Tigris-Euphrates valley not more than a century ago have revealed many things about these ancient peoples. Much more remains to be done. There are still many problems to be solved, many gaps to be filled, and many phenomena to be interpreted.

This little book, by a student and lover of these ancient peoples, can give only a glimpse of one of the most fascinating problems of Semitic culture. The religious and moral ideas in Babylonia and Assyria, not only because of their close and unique relation to the Old Testament, and through it to the New Testament and to Christianity, but also because of themselves, are second to none in human interest.

The author has assumed a certain knowledge of the history of Babylonia and Assyria on the part of the reader, but he has endeavoured to make what he has to say as readable for the layman as possible. In order to assist the reader in forming an historical background for his study, the author has prefixed a

chronological outline; and, to avoid overcrowding the pages with references and footnotes, he has appended a selected bibliography. But be it noted, in order to inspire due confidence in our study, that no assertion has been made, and no conclusion has been drawn, which cannot be thoroughly substantiated by reference to the original texts. So that our study, while aiming at a modern presentation of Babylonian and Assyrian religious and moral ideas, has never once consciously departed from facts deducible from the monuments.

On account of the limitations of our plan, much detail has had to be omitted. No discussion of the astrological theories of Winckler and Jeremias has been offered, nor have the relations between Babylonian and Assyrian religious thought and that of the Old Testament been discussed. These subjects belong to fuller treatments. But this plan, it is hoped, has permitted a clearer and more connected exposition of the ideas of God and Man, of Mediation and the Future, and of Morality, in Babylonia and Assyria, than could have been gained in a more detailed study.

It only remains to be said that the author hopes that this little essay, with all its imperfections, will add to the growing interest in the past, and especially in those great culture lands, which are the cradle of the world's best thought and noblest ideals.

SAMUEL A. B. MERCER.

Hibbard Egyptian Library  
Western Theological Seminary, Chicago  
April 4, 1919

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## CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF BABYLONIAN AND ASSYRIAN HISTORY

PERIOD OF SUMERIAN SUPREMACY, 3400\*-2225 B. C.

3400-2225 B. C. Southern and Northern Babylonia, that is, Sumer and Akkad, were divided among many city-states. This gave rise to various dynasties, the chief of which are: Dynasty of Kish, 2750-2650; Dynasty of Akkad, 2650-2600; Dynasty of Lagash, 2650-2300; Dynasty of Ur, 2450-2300; Dynasty of Nisin, 2300-2115; Dynasty of Larsa, 2335-2069.

3400-2750 “ During this period, before the rise of the Dynasties of Kish, Akkad, and Lagash, there were many kings in Kish, Opis, Akkad, Lagash, Umma, Uruk, and Ur, the chief of which were Utug, the first king of Kish, about 3400 B. C.; Mesilim of Kish, shortly after Utug; Lugalshag-engur, in Lagash, a contemporary of Mesilim; and Lugal-zag-gisi, king of Erech and Sumer, about 2800, the first great empire-builder of Babylonia. From about 2950-2800 a line of important kings, beginning with Eannatum, reigned in Lagash.

2750-2650 “ Sharru-Gi founded the Dynasty of Kish.

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\* These early dates are approximate.

- 2650-2600 B. C. During this short period two of the most famous kings of Babylonia ruled, namely, Sargon and his son Naram-Sin. They formed the dynasty of Akkad.
- 2650-2300 “ Dynasty of Lagash. This dynasty numbered many great rulers, among them being Ur-Bau and Gudea.
- 2450-2300 “ Dynasty of Ur, whose first king was Ur-Engur, who was immediately succeeded by the famous rulers, Dungi, Bur-Sin, Gimil-Sin, and Ibi-Sin.
- 2300-2115 “ Dynasty of Nisin, which ran down into the period contemporaneous with the First Babylonian Dynasty.
- 2335-2069 “ Dynasty of Larsa, contemporaneous with the Dynasty of Nisin. Its greatest kings were Warad-Sin, Rim-Sin, Hammurapi, and Samsu-iluna, the last two of whom reigned in Babylon also.

During this period great centres of worship had developed in both north and south, and the cult had assumed a form which changed very little in later times. Due, however, to the different centres of political power, and the consequent lack of national unity, no progress was made in the way of religious centralization.

#### PERIOD OF BABYLONIAN SUPREMACY, 2225-732 B. C.

- 2225-1926 B. C. First Babylonian, or Hammurapi, Dynasty.
- Babylon's great antagonists were Nisin and Larsa. Nisin was captured in 2115, and Hammurapi defeated Rim-Sin, and subdued Larsa in 2092. Henceforth, there was no question about the supremacy of Babylon. With the defeat of Rim-Sin Babylon became the centre, and its god, Marduk, became head of the pantheon. There arose



a tendency to supplant all the great gods of former times by Marduk. Poems that were written in honour of other gods were now accommodated to Marduk. Imperialism was afoot in both religion and state. More organization in religion was done in this period than at any other time in the history of Babylonia and Assyria. And not only in religion, but also in all spheres of human activity, Hammurapi was the great organizing genius. He built stately temples, overthrew mighty kings, and drew up a Code of Laws, such as the world had never seen before. Nor were the priests idle. They found leisure to make a profound study of the heavenly bodies, and systematized an astrological theory of religion which remained down to the very end of Babylonian and Assyrian religious life, and then it converted itself into a scientific astronomy which was inherited and further developed by the Greeks.

1926-732 B. C. Second to Ninth Babylonian Dynasties. The eight Dynasties of Babylon which succeeded the Hammurapi Dynasty never duplicated what that first golden era had accomplished. Babylon and Babylonia remained strong in the power of its unity and centralization till the period of Assyrian domination.

#### PERIOD OF ASSYRIAN OVERLORDSHIP, 732-606 B. C.

732-606 B. C. Assyria arose about 2100 B. C., and soon became the rival of Babylonia. But she did not accomplish much in the way of usurping power over Babylonia till 732, when Babylonia, under her weak kings, fell an easy prey to her more virile northern neighbour.

During Assyria's supremacy, the great god of Ashur, namely, Ashur, became supreme in Assyria, though Marduk retained his grandeur in Babylon. Assyria always looked upon Babylonia as the great motherland, and home of culture, and was proud of her association with her. But religious ideas and customs during this period did not escape the militaristic colouring of the warlike country of Assyria.

One of the most important Assyrian kings was Ashurbanipal, 668-625, who built one of the world's great libraries. It is from the ruins of this library that thousands of our finest inscriptions have been excavated. Ashurbanipal caused copies to be made of the most important literature of Sumeria and Babylonia.

#### NEO-BABYLONIAN PERIOD, 625-538 B. C.

625-538 B. C. Neo-Babylonian Empire. According as Assyria weakened, during the last fifty years of her existence, Babylonia became strong, until, in 625, Nabopolassar proclaimed his independence. He was followed by the great Nebuchadrezzar, and it seemed for a time as if the old glory of Babylon was about to be restored. He, however, was followed by a series of weak kings, until the weakest of them all, from a military point of view, was easily dethroned by the forces of the virile Persian king, Cyrus. Thus ended the Babylonian empire. Persian kings ruled in Babylon till the capture of that city by Alexander in 331 B. C.

# I

## INTRODUCTION

In the great temple of the world's religious thought, Babylonia and Assyria form one of the most important and interesting pillars. How clear and sharp that temple stands out in the history of the world's culture! There is the great, bright, solemn temple, where men worship the gods. Its doors are open; its windows tempt the sky. There are many things there that have to do with such a temple. The winds come wandering through its high arches. The children roam across its threshold, and play for a few minutes on its shining floor. Banners and draperies bedeck its walls. Poor men and women, with their burdens and distress, come in and say a moment's prayer, and hurry on. Stately processions pass up the nave, making a brief disturbance in its quiet air. Generation after generation comes and goes and is forgotten, each giving its place up to another; while still the temple stands, receiving and dismissing them in turn, and outliving them all. All these are transitory. All these come into the temple and then go out again. But the day comes when

the great temple needs enlargement. The plan which it embodies must be made more perfect. It is to grow to a completer self. And then they bring up to the doors a column of cut stone, hewn in the quarry for this very place, fitted and fit for this place and for no other; and bringing it in with toil, they set it solidly down as part of the growing structure, part of the expanding plan. It blends with all the other stones. It loses while it keeps its individuality. It is useless except there where it is; and yet there, where it is, it has a use which is peculiarly its own, and different from every other stone's. The walls are built around it. It shares the building's changes. The lights of sacred festivals shine on its face. It glows in the morning sunlight, and grows dim and solemn as the dusk gathers through the great expanse. Generations pass before it in their worship. They come and go, and the new generations follow them, and still the pillar stands. The day when it was hewn and set there is forgotten; as children never think when an old patriarch, whom they see standing among them, was born. It is part of the temple where the men so long dead set it so long ago.

Such is the story of the pillar—the Babylonian and Assyrian religion—in the great temple of the world's religious thought. Long, long ago, in times now forgotten, a mountain people moved westward into the valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates. They settled there and worshipped their gods, some of whom had come with them, and others of whom had revealed themselves to their worshippers in their

new home. A new pillar in the great universal temple of divine worship was brought in, to go "no more out". Later another wave of migration entered these fertile plains. This came from the western home of the Semites, and brought its gods and religious customs with it, adding beauty and form to the great pillar already established. A great state was set up at Kish, which later became an empire under the first Sargon, taking the name of the Empire of Akkad. Other centres were formed at Ur, Uruk, Lagash, etc. For many years independent dynasties arose here and there, from north to south, till finally, sometime before 2000 B. C., Babylon arose as a great centre and her kings, especially Hammurapi, swayed the whole valley. About the same time, in the north, a seed was sown, which was destined to become a mighty empire, whose unity was unique in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Its centre was at the city of Ashur, and the country was called Assyria. This country was founded by immigrants from Nina, a part of the city of Lagash, in the south. They brought their goddess Nina, who was later called Ishtar, and she became the consort of the proper god of the land, Ashur. Thus new embellishments were added to the stately pillar of Babylonian and Assyrian religion. But Assyria remained comparatively weak till the time of Tiglath-pileser I, about 1117 B. C. Meanwhile Babylon had fallen before the Hittites, and into the hands of the Kassites who ruled till about 1200 B. C., after which a series of weak kings occupied the throne. Assyria had grown

great, and in the reign of Tiglath-pileser I the once proud and mighty city of Babylon fell into the hands of the Assyrian kings. However, although the dynasties in Babylonia and Assyria were different, and their policies divergent, their religion was the same, and they worshipped the same gods. The pillar in the great temple was the same, only further polished and decorated. And so when the Assyrian kings marched into the city of Babylon they did not destroy it; rather they came as if to pay their respect to Marduk, the great city-god, and to "take his hand", in recognition of his supreme authority in all things Babylonian. Assyrian religion, as well as her general culture, her art and architecture, her science and commerce, her literature and laws, were borrowed from Babylonia. Assyria fell in 606 B. C., when all life and religion centred in Babylon, and the Neo-Babylonian empire inherited what was common and peculiar to both Babylonia and Assyria.

Small and great religions as well as small and great men must all stand before the standard, or test, or source, of religious or individual judgment. In the temple of the world's religion, the pillar representing the religion of Babylonia and Assyria stands. Though the mighty empires of Babylonia and Assyria have long passed on into oblivion, their religious as well as their cultural influence still lives, yea, is immortal. But this influence is judged in the light of a universal religious standard. The pillar is strong or weak, fine or inferior, in accordance with its comparative worth and importance in the whole structure. When the

mighty gods called to Babylonia and Assyria their challenge did not always receive the highest response. Shallow often responded to deep, instead of deep to the call of deep. In spite of their mighty accomplishments; in spite of the vision of god which Babylonia and Assyria saw and gave to the world; in spite of their contributions to human knowledge and science; and in spite of their deep, keen, penetration into the realities of moral law; their failure to relate time to eternity, to translate this world with its sufferings and distress into terms of universal realities, has marred the perfection of their pillar in God's temple. But, excepting this serious blemish, the contribution of Babylonia and Assyria to the bulk of the world's best treasures is one of the grandest which any race can claim.

## II

### THE IDEA OF GOD IN BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

The world has always been man's greatest problem. We not only love its landscape with all the power of our bodily senses; but we also store up its associations with us, its joys and its delights, and we love it with all our heart. Nor do we stop there, for we not only respond to that in the world which appeals to our reverence and gratefulness, and so love the world with all our soul; or to that which appeals to our power of working, and so love it with all our strength; but we also respond to that desire, common to all humanity, to solve the great problems which start out from the earth and from the sky to tempt us. Scenes in nature cry out to us to come and admire them, to come and work on them, or to come and study them. And immediately a series of questions arises to the baffled but determined mind. What hangs the stars in their places and swings them on their way? How does the earth build the stately tree out of the petty seed? How does the river feed the fields? What built the mountains, and spread out the plains? These and many other similar ques-



tions, some simpler, some more profound, have always been asked by man. They leap out from nature, and, pressing in past our senses and emotions and practical powers, never rest till they have found out our intelligence. They appeal to the mind, and the mind responds to them—not coldly, as if it had nothing to do but just to find and register their answers, but enthusiastically, loving the nature out of which they spring. And so we love the world in which we live with all our mind.

This has always been the experience of man. In this respect the early Babylonian and Assyrian were no exceptions. But the greatest of all problems that presented itself to early man, including the Babylonians, was the question of motion, which he interpreted as a sign of life. What caused the rivers to flow and the leaves to grow, the wind to blow and the storms to rage? Why did the sun, the moon, and the stars cross and recross the heavens? In short, what is that which seems to be the cause of all the sounds, and signs, and motions, which are continually in evidence? What else but life, the power of causing motion and noise? Man himself was free to move, to make signs, and to utter sounds, and his power to do so consisted in his being alive. It was his life which was the all pervading force in his actions. It was an easy step for the primitive man to make, when he transferred this same power, life, to every object—to all objects—for every object was capable of manifesting power. Thus the early Babylonians endowed every object with a *zi*, life or spirit.

The world was full of spirits. There were river-spirits and stream-spirits, rock-spirits and mountain-spirits, vegetation-spirits and storm-spirits, and many others. The ways of some spirits were understood more thoroughly than those of others. But none of them were understood completely. They were always more or less undefined, and so the various spirits were always more or less mysterious. Those spirits who were considered powerful and friendly were gods, and those who were unfriendly and less powerful were demons and indifferent spirits.

The early Babylonians lived in small groups—families or small clans—separated from one another. Each such group recognized various gods, representing the different living objects in its neighbourhood. But that one living object which impressed itself upon the attention of the group with most intensity became the manifesting medium of that spirit, which became the god of the group. Thus a social group living in the neighbourhood of a large body of water would have a water-god, just as the community at Eridu, on the Persian Gulf, worshipped Ea, a water-god. But it would recognize the existence of many other gods. The number of possible gods was almost limitless. A nomadic group would develop a very large pantheon; and would change its gods from time to time, its chief god being the specific god of the location where it was temporarily settled. In fact, such moving groups were apt to interpret its deity as a goddess, in keeping with the necessarily matriarchal character of its constitution. In moving groups the mother is the permanent

element in family life, a fact which often gave rise to a belief in a goddess as head of a group of gods. This consideration will probably explain the power and influence of Ishtar among the early Semitic Babylonians, who were a nomadic people. It will also account for the fact that Ningirsu, "lady of Girsu", god of Lagash, was originally a goddess. In settled and agricultural groups a male deity was the centre of divine life, with whom was associated a female consort. Thus Ea's consort was Damkina, the "faithful spouse", and Enlil's was Ninlil, "lady of the storm".

Primitive people ask of their gods that they be as familiar as possible, that they have to do with daily life, that they seem to issue from the heart of common things and clothe those things with light which makes them radiant. They dread mystery. They hate to be bidden to lift up their eyes and look far away. They desire their gods to be near, and they find them in all affairs of life, domestic and public, social and political. Consequently, when a group grew and became powerful, the god of the group likewise grew and became powerful. If the group added to itself other groups or absorbed them, the god of the group added to himself the gods of the added groups or absorbed them. In this way groups of gods or pantheons arose.

In Babylonia the earliest centres of such enlarged groups—towns which added to themselves and absorbed all villages and towns in their vicinity—were Eridu, Ur, Uruk, Nippur, Kutha, Opis, Kish, Agade, and Sippar. There were others, such as La-

gash, Babylon, Ashur. The god of such a centre became the chief deity and around him were assembled, among others, the gods and goddesses of the united and absorbed communities. Thus at the dawn of history we find Enlil of Nippur, Ea or Enki of Eridu, and Anu and Ishtar or Nana of Erech worshipped as heads of great groups of peoples. In fact, there is reason to believe that each of these great centres held sway over a large portion of the country at different times; Enlil of Nippur, for instance, receiving homage from gods of distant centres, which were themselves centres of great groups of people. That is, the more powerful a great city or state became, the more extended the sway of its chief god was. This was also true of Ningirsu of Lagash, Nana and Anu of Uruk, Sin of Ur, and Shamash of Larsa, and of Sippar.

It sometimes happened also that the god of an absorbed town became the chief god of the absorbing city. This is true of Ningirsu of Lagash, who was originally lord, or lady, of Girsu, a town which undoubtedly became amalgamated into Lagash. Then around Ningirsu of Lagash gathered a whole pantheon of deities. The chief of these was Bau, his consort, besides deities of irrigation, of weapons, of musical instruments, of flocks and herds, of fishes, and of streams, of household duties, and of cattle. And deities of surrounding towns were granted a place in the central temple, or a quarter in the city, of Lagash. Such were the goddesses Gatumdug, Nina, and Innina. In later times Marduk of Babylon and his

consort Sarpanit grouped around themselves such powerful deities as Ea and Damkina of Eridu, Nabu and Tashmit of Borsippa, Nergal and Allatu of Kutha, Shamash and Ai of Sippar, and Sin and Ningal of Ur. This was due to the extraordinary greatness of Marduk's city, Babylon. Nor did the tendency end there, for the characteristics and achievements of the absorbed and associated gods were very often assumed by the absorbing god. Thus Marduk replaced Enlil in the creation story in the same way that he himself was absorbed by Yahweh, in later times, in the Hebrew references to creation.

In the very earliest times divine manifestations were seen in the commonest phenomena, in the streams and rivers, rocks and mountains, vegetation, and forces of nature. But according as men began to be more interested in the vast cosmic forces, so their attention became centred in such phenomena as the sky, the earth, and the ocean.

The sky was personified as Anu. The Semitic word *anu* is derived from the Sumerian *ana*, which means "heaven". The deity Anu was supposed to be enthroned in the heavens, and as such was the highest of all gods, and king of the gods. Why the centre of the worship of Anu was Uruk is not known. It seems that the inhabitants of that city happened to be the first to give prominence to the sky-god. In Assyrian times the god had a home at Ashur. Anu's worship can be traced back to the very beginning of history in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. He was the supreme dispenser of all events, especially of those

which related to the earth, and his consort was Anatu, who was sometimes regarded as an earth goddess.

Enlil (or Ellil) was the "lord of lands", and the personification of the earth. At a very early time he gained great eminence in Babylonia, for such great gods as Sin of Ur and Ningirsu of Lagash were called his sons. He is thought to have been the chief god of the Sumerian people, and as Nippur may have been the first settlement of the Sumerians in southern Babylonia, an explanation of Nippur as the seat of this god would be thus explained. He is sometimes called the "great mountain", an epithet which would point to his origin among the Sumerians before they migrated west from their original mountain home. This would account for the name of his temple in Nippur, which was E-Kur, "mountain-house", a sanctuary built probably on an artificial mound to represent the original home of the god.

Enlil has been called the older Bel. His consort was Ninlil, called also Belit-matate or Belit-ile, "lady of the lands" and "lady of the god", respectively. Being a mountain-god, he also associated with storms, in the same way that the Hebrew god, Yahweh, was associated with Sinai, and was known as a storm-god.

The deity which personified the great waters of the world was Ea, whose seat was at Eridu on the Persian Gulf, an appropriate place for a water-deity. He is comparable with Osiris of Egypt. Being the water-deity, and water being associated with exorcism, Ea became, at a very early date, the chief deity of exorcism, and, as father of Marduk, he retained that distinc-

tion until the latest times in Babylonia and Assyria. He was consequently the god of wisdom also, and as such the adviser and helper of mankind. His consort was Damkina, a shadowy counter-part, who, like most Babylonian goddesses, never played any important rôle in any form of human and divine relationships.

The most attractive natural phenomena, and the most mysterious, have always been the sun and the moon. They have been deified by all ancient races. In Babylonia the moon was deified primarily by those who lived near the desert, and whose experiences associated them with desert life. Nomadic tribes, who roam the desert, live continually in fear of conflict with other tribes. Their time of greatest activity is during the night when light is not too intense, and when they can elude the pursuit of a possible enemy. But the moon's light on such an occasion is a veritable blessing. It furnishes just enough light to make movement easy, but not enough to make detection probable. Hence the deification of the moon among races who are or were nomads. In Babylonia the moon was worshipped by those who lived in western parts, just on the border of the desert.

To those peoples who lived a settled, agricultural life, who appreciated the part which the sun plays in the growth of the necessities of life, and who enjoyed its warmth, although sometimes dreading its intense heat, the sun has always appeared as a god. The sun is the great mysterious being which sails across the heavens every day, returning each night to the beginning of its course.



The sun was personified as Shamash by the Semites, but as Ud, "light", or Babbar by the Sumerians. His chief centre of worship was at Sippar, though he was also closely identified with Larsa, the latter being the oldest residence of Shamash. His sanctuary was called E-Babbar, "shining house", and his chief characteristics were justice and righteousness, of which he was the source and dispenser.

Besides Shamash, the sun was thought to be manifested in the form of other deities. The sky-god Anu was, in the minds of his worshippers of Uruk, a solar deity, as also were Ninib at Nippur, and later Marduk at Babylon and Ashur at Ashur in Assyria. In short there grew up a regular cycle of solar deities. At Lagash, Ningirsu was a solar deity, as were also Nergal of Kutha and Zamama of Kish, as well as the fire-god Nusku. At a later time priestly attempts were made to differentiate these sun-gods. Ningirsu and Ninib were called sun-gods of the springtime or of the morning, while Nergal was assigned to the midsummer or high noon.

Shamash, the supreme judge and giver of oracles, was not only celebrated as the brother of Ishtar and the consort of Ai, but he was also the father of Kettu, "justice", and Mesharu, "rectitude". With the mystery of Shamash, the god of light, were bound up the cleverness and fairness of justice and righteousness. The sun was full of mystery to the early Babylonians and Assyrians. The nearer they approached him the more mysterious he became. But just as he had the power to penetrate into all corners and



crevices of daily life, so his word had the power of detecting unfair dealings among men. The Babylonians, who had a genius for business, soon developed that sense of right proportion in human relationships, which was the result of deep insight into business principles, and which they associated with that divine being whose character it was to bring everything to the test of the light of day.

On the other hand, the sun was sometimes considered an agent of destruction. His rays could warm and comfort, but they could scorch and burn also. And the seasons of intensest heat were also those of destruction, of lightning and thunderstorms. There came, therefore, to be associated with Shamash and other solar-deities, gods of destructive storms. Thus, with Shamash was associated Adad, who was likewise associated with Anu. But the beneficent character of the solar-deities was that which primarily appealed to the Babylonians and Assyrians.

Just as the sun was the favourite heavenly body among agricultural peoples, so the moon always appealed to the nomad. On the western border of Babylonia, in the neighbourhood of the great desert, the moon was personified as Sin at two great centres, Ur in the south and Harran in the north. At Ur, his temple was called E-Kishshirgal, "house of light", and his own Sumerian name was En-Zu, "lord of knowledge"; among the Semites he was also known as Nannar, "illumination". As lord of knowledge, Sin was the god of oracles, and the well-disposed father of mankind. He was considered a most powerful god

from the beginning of his career, for Shamash was called his son and Ishtar was his daughter. His consort was Ningal, "the great lady", "the queen".

Powerful as Sin was he never gathered around him a cycle of divine beings as did Shamash. He was inclined to keep his own councils and jealously to watch for the allegiance of his own worshippers. He is primarily interesting to modern students because of his chief cities Ur and Harran, both of which are associated with the name of the Hebrew patriarch, Abraham, and especially because of the effect which his cult had upon the Hebrew god, Yahweh, who was associated with Sinai, the mountain of Sin, and whose relationship with the followers of Sin has left its lasting mark not only upon Judaism but upon Christianity as well. Our custom of dividing time into weeks of seven days each is eloquent testimony to the power and influence of the ancient Babylonian god Sin. And not only in this particular matter but in many other ways our modern culture bears not a few marks of Babylonian moon-worship.

Because of Ishtar's identification with the star Venus, the goddess should be discussed here, although she was probably at first a personification of fertility in human, animal, and plant life. As such she became the great mother-goddess. She always maintained an independent existence. Her oldest seat was Uruk, though she was associated with many other places during her career, such as Akkad, Nineveh, Arbela, and Kidmurru. As Nana she is called the daughter of Anu, but she is also known as the daugh-

ter of Sin. This would lead to the conclusion that in her character were absorbed other deities, and this is precisely what happened. In fact, she absorbed all other goddesses in the pantheon, becoming the goddess *par excellence*. In Assyria she became the consort of Ashur.

Having absorbed many other goddesses, Ishtar was possessed of many attributes. She was associated with Gilgamesh, a solar deity, and her lover was Tammuz, a personification of the sun of springtime. As the great mother-goddess, she was associated with the fertility of nature and of man, and became the goddess of love, and of sexual impulse. In her character of love-goddess her fame and worship spread to the land of the Hittites, as well as to Phoenicia, where she was known as Ashtart, to Canaan, where she was called Ash-toreth, and to far-off Greece and Rome, where she was worshipped under the familiar name of the Mater Magna.

In Assyria, especially, she became the patron of battles, as was her Assyrian consort Ashur. And as the war-like Ishtar her symbol was the lion. She was also symbolized by the dove, but this was in her character as goddess of justice and righteousness, the goddess "judging the cause of man with justice and righteousness". In this rôle she was associated with all that is ethically true, being commemorated in hymns and psalms with considerable ethical content. Thus she is addressed by a penitent who says :

"I, thy servant, full of sighs, call upon thee;  
The fervent prayer of him who has sinned do thou accept.

If thou lookest upon a man, that man lives.  
O all-powerful mistress of mankind,  
Merciful one, to whom it is good to turn, who hears sighs!"

The most powerful Babylonian god was Marduk, the city-god of Babylon. He was originally a clan-god, but when his people developed Babylon to the supreme place in Babylonia, Marduk, from being a comparatively obscure deity, became the head of the pantheon. Consequently, there arose a tendency to group all gods around him, and to ascribe to him the attributes of such great gods as Enlil, Ea, Shamash, Nergal, Adad, and Sin. His power became so supreme that the ceremony of "taking the hand of Marduk" was essential to a candidate for the throne of Babylonia.

Marduk was a solar deity, and son of Ea of Eridu. His temple in Babylon was E-sagila, "lofty house", and his wife was Sarpanit. The neighbouring god of Borsippa, Nabu, though himself very powerful, became Marduk's son. According as Marduk became more and more powerful and influential, so he usurped the place of other deities and subordinated them and their rights to himself. From Nabu he took over the attribute of "arbiter of destiny"; he became the "healer" of mankind instead of Ea; he assumed the rôle of creator god instead of Enlil; and prayers and hymns were interpolated and glossed in order to give him the greater glory. He became the lord, Bel, *par excellence*, his consort being named Belit, and the great New Year feast became his, making him the

lord and giver of life, the sun, from whom and in whom all things exist.

Nabu was the neighbour of Marduk, the god of Borsippa, and was much more powerful and influential before than after the rise of Babylon. His temple was E-zida, "house of wisdom", and his consort was Tashmit, though Nana and Nisaba were also associated with him in that capacity.

Although a god of vegetation, his chief attribute was that of arbiter of destinies. He was the god of wisdom, of writing, and of prophecy, and it is probable that he was so closely associated with wisdom, as an element in prophecy, that his name penetrated into western Semitic lands and became the title of those men in Israel who were, previous to the time of Samuel, called seers. The Hebrew word for prophet, *nabi*, is most likely to be traced to the name of this god.

Ninib, or as his name is probably now to be read, Ninurasa, was the god of Nippur, the first-born of Enlil, the great physician and god of healing, and the god of the chase. His consort was Gula. He was especially connected with war, as the "mighty hero", and personified the spirit of battle and conquest.

Nergal was the god of Kutha. His temple was E-shitlam, and his consort was Ereshkigal. Originally a vegetation god, he became the benevolent protector of the fields. But he is famous as a god of plague and fever, similar to the pestilence-god Ira, and especially as a war-god. When he married Ereshkigal, queen of the underworld, he became god of the dead and

of their realm. As a result of this, his city, Kutha, became a poetic designation of the great gathering-place of the dead, and his symbol was the fierce lion, greedy for human victims.

Nusku was a god of light, and was usually associated with Enlil of Nippur, though he was also known as son of Sin at Harran. As light or heat god he was the destroyer of all evil, and the promoter of all good. His counterpart was Gibil (or Girru), a personification of fire, and god of the smithcraft and of holy sacrificial fire. His province was to destroy evil by means of purifying fire. Both gods, because of their association with purifying and destroying fire, were ethical in character.

Tammuz holds an unique position among the great Babylonian gods. His Sumerian name is Dumuzi, "real child", but an older name made him Dumuzi-zuab, "real child of the watery deep". As such he was associated with Ea of Eridu, and became identified with all green plant-growth and with spring, the season of beginning of vegetation. In fact, he became the god who revives in spring and dies in summer, like the Egyptian Osiris. With him were associated festivals of mourning and festivals of joy, for his death and resurrection. He was never intimately associated with any one centre, for he became popular and democratic, even, in a sense, an universal god in Babylonia. With him was associated Ishtar the great mother-goddess, who personified fertilization. He was her husband and lover both, and with them was connected his sister Geshtinanna, who plays a

similar part to that taken by Nephthys in Egypt. His cult became most popular and extended to Israel, where it was very prominent at the time of Ezekiel. His worship might have become very powerful and enduring if there had been similar conditions to those in Egypt, which would have served as soil in which the seed could have grown. But the Babylonians were a sterner people than the Egyptians, to whom the joyful note in the character of Tammuz could not make a lasting appeal; and they had never developed a conception of the future which was capable of rendering the Tammuz-resurrection idea influential, necessary, and attractive.

There were many other Babylonian gods, each of whom was connected with some place or person. They were so numerous that two general terms were applied to them, namely, the Igigi, or earth-deities, and the Anunnaki, or heaven-gods. It is felt by some students of Babylonian and Hebrew religion that even the god of Israel, Yahweh, was for some time at least associated with the Babylonian pantheon, his name being found in such combinations as Ya-u-um-ilu of the Hammurapi period and Ya-u-bani of the Kassite period; the former being equivalent in construction and meaning to the name Elijah, "Yahweh is my god"; and the latter to the name Asahiah, "whom Yahweh created".

Assyria inherited the religion of Babylonia, although she breathed into it her national warlike character, and her pantheon coincided with that of Babylonia, except in the case of Ashur and Adad. Ashur



was a solar deity, and patron-god of the city of Ashur, where his cult can be traced to a very primitive time. The antiquity of Ashur's settlement in Ashur is indicated by the fact that when Anu was recognized there with Ashur, he was god of Uruk. In fact, a common etymology connected Ashur with Anu, by deriving the name Ashur from An-shar. From the first, Ashur became head of the Assyrian pantheon, around whom, as around Marduk in Babylon, all the gods were grouped. All rôles of the great Babylonian gods were ascribed to him and a creation myth arose, a trace of which still survives, in which Ashur is the creator. The two great gods Ashur and Marduk were supreme in their own political and religious spheres, and became rivals only when Babylonia gave the Assyrians trouble. Then the statue of Marduk was carried off to Assyria, by Sennacherib, who besieged and destroyed Babylon in 689 B. C. But when Ashurbanipal came to the throne he returned the statue from Nineveh to Babylon and "took the hand of Bel".

The Assyrians were a warlike people, and Ashur their god became primarily a war-god. He was symbolized by a winged-disk, with a man with a bow and arrow within the disk. His solar character is indicated by the disk; and it is interesting to note that his cult was devoid of statues, although there is no evidence that it was more spiritual than that of Babylonian gods. His supreme aloneness in Assyria is due to the great unity of the country, geographically and politically, where he had no rival, and to the fact



that the Assyrians were almost always absorbed in war and conquest, and Ashur was their great leader.

But other deities were recognized and worshipped, chiefly Sin, Shamash, Adad, Marduk, Nabu, Ishtar, Ninib, Nergal, Nusku, as well as the three great gods Anu, Enlil, and Ea.

The other great Assyrian god was Adad or Raman, a god of storms and rains. He gave rains in time of drought, and was, accordingly a beneficent deity; but he also withheld rain and brought on drought and famine, and was, therefore, a god of destruction also. He had no special place of worship in Assyria, being a foreign god, who came from the west lands, although he shared a sanctuary with Anu at Ashur, called the Anu-Adad temple. He was symbolized by the thunderbolt and by an ox, types of his strength and character as a weather-god; he was in many ways the counterpart of Enlil; and his wife was Shala.

The goddess Ishtar retained her power and popularity in Assyria. She was closely associated with Ashur, as war-goddess, and was differentiated in a threefold way as Ishtar of Nineveh, of Arbela, and of Kidmurru. This threefold differentiation was probably due to the fact that the name Ishtar had become a generic term for goddess, and was consequently ascribed to different deities. This would be all the more probable when we consider the fact that Babylonian and Assyrian goddesses were never more than shadowy counterparts of the gods, with the exception of just the same goddess, whose name

became a designation of all goddesses. That is, whenever a goddess, such as those of Nineveh, Arbela, and Kidmurru, became powerful, they adopted the name Ishtar, as symbol of independence and power.

The other goddesses of Babylonia and Assyria remained from first to last mere reflections of their consorts. Such were, for example, Ninlil, Ningal, Damkina, Shala, Sarpanit, Tashit, Antum, Gula, and Ereshkigal, consorts of Enlil, Sin, Ea, Adad, Marduk, Nabu, Anu, Ninib, and Nergal, respectively.

The Neo-Babylonian empire possessed a national unity and character that was altogether unknown in early Babylonia. As a result, everything centred around the national god Marduk, although there were other gods. It was a period of national consciousness, and the ideal was the greatness of the past. This resulted in a great religious revival, and an attempt to imitate the past in art and culture. It was not unlike the Saite age in Egypt, and resulted in the same political impotency. Because Nabonidus was more interested in archaeology and the past, Babylon fell an easy prey to the more modern and alert Cyrus.

When Jacob said, "If God will keep me in the way that I go and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall Yahweh be my God," he was merely being true to the early Semitic ideal. Each man reserved the right to approach his god on any and all occasions. The gods were to be worshipped and appealed to, nor did any undue fear or dread hold the Babylonians and Assyrians back from the exercise of these

rights. In fact each man had a personal god, and called himself the "son of his god", *dumu dingir-ra-ni*, or *mar ili-su*. Sometimes a god would desert his client, and then demons would come and attack the man. And so the earnest desire of each person was to keep on good terms, especially with his patron-deity, in order to insure his continual protection.

In the early Sumerian period, between about 3200 and 2800 B. C., there was no national religion. The national unit was the city-state, and each city-state had its own chief god, with, sometimes, other divine adherents. There was, however, a tendency to recognize any god who became very powerful; thus, because of the greatness and power of Nippur, its god, Enlil, became very prominent, and was widely recognized and worshipped. Nevertheless, Enlil never became a national god. Each centre of organized government had its own great god—Enki (Ea) at Eridu, Nannar (Sin) at Ur, Anu and Nana (Ishtar) at Uruk, Enlil at Nippur, Nergal at Kutha, and Zamama at Kish.

During the first Akkadian or Semitic period, from about 2800 to 2400 B. C., there arose a tendency to systematize theological thinking. The Sumerians never seemed inclined to systematization. They were content to live in small isolated groups, and to think in an isolated theological way. But the Semites were different. They had the genius of democratic amalgamation. The theological result was an attempt to relate the gods one to another. This took shape in the formulation of divine triads, the first probably

being Anu, Enlil, and Enki (Ea), but with further organization a double triad was created; namely, one centring in Uruk and Nippur, resulting in Anu, Ninib, Enlil (later Ea, Enlil, Ninib), and the second centring in Eridu, resulting in Ea, Nabu, Marduk (later, Ea, Marduk, Nabu). In very ancient times there may have been a duad, such as Anshar and Kishar, god of the upper and god of the lower region, but this is doubtful, and may be later speculation.

With the increase of Sumerian power during the dynasties of Ur and Nisin, from about 2400 to 2100 B. C., theological speculation and organization again became dormant, but with the rise of the First Dynasty of Babylon, about 2100 B. C., a Semitic race of rulers, theological organization again came into its own. Other triads were now constructed, the chief being, Ea, Marduk, Nabu; Ea being the father, Marduk the son, and Nabu the grandson. Under the influence of the same impulse, triads sprang up all over the land. Thus, at Haran, Sin became the head of a divine family, Sin, Ningal, Ishtar, the third member being sometimes Nusku. This triad became popular in the reign of Hammurapi, as Sin, Shamash, Ishtar, due to astrological speculation.

It was during the First Babylonian Dynasty that the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars, were closely studied, and there arose a school of priestly astrologers or astronomers. The sun was Shamash, the moon Sin, and the star Venus was Ishtar. This resulted in the triad, Shamash, Sin, and Ishtar. The priests thought they had discovered a close link between the move-

ments going on in the heavens and occurrences on earth. This led to an identification of the chief deities with the heavenly bodies, and to assignment of the seats of all the divine beings to heaven. Besides the identification of Shamash, Sin, and Ishtar, with the sun, moon, and Venus, Marduk was identified with Jupiter, Nergal with Mars, Nabu with Mercury, and Ninib with Saturn. The old triad Anu, Enlil, Enki (Ea) took on new life as Anu, Bel, Ea, the powerful heaven-god, the earth-god, and the water-god, respectively.

The priests proceeded to further elaboration, using popular belief in the dependence of earthly circumstances upon heavenly phenomena, and developed a regular system of astrology, and an elaborate method of divining the future. Even liver divination, which will be described in another place, the oldest form of divination, was brought into connection with this astrological system. Ea and his son Marduk became the great lords of divination and incantation, and all signs in the heavens as well as on the earth were referred to them.

This whole priestly system of astrology is thus comparatively late. There is no evidence at all that Marduk, Nabu, Ninib, and Nergal were originally connected with the stars, nor is there any convincing evidence that the astral idea reached back as far as Sumerian times. Astrology grew gradually but steadily, but became to a large extent official, for there is no proof that the fortunes of individuals were foretold from the study of the stars till Greek times.

Nor did astrology pass from a purely religious discipline to a scientific study till the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods.

The favourite triad of the Kassite period, lasting till 1750 B. C., was Sin, Shamash, Ishtar. The Assyrians did not lay any emphasis upon the formulation of triads, for they were sufficiently confident in their god Ashur. In them, as Semites, we see the power of concentration at its highest, except in later days in Israel. Ashur was not the only god, but he was all about whom it was necessary to worry. Other gods were his assistants. He was the lord and master, the protector, and leader of his people. But the Neo-Babylonians retained their triad which usually took the form of Sin, Shamash, Adad; Sin, Shamash, Ishtar; or Nergal, Adad, Ishtar. Their pantheon, however, remained very large, the chief deities being Marduk, Nabu, Ishtar, Shamash, and Sin.

The ideal at all times has been to make things according to the pattern in the mount. The perfect workman needs a perfect pattern. All things, before they are brought into being, exist in the mind of the gods. The perfect workman translates them into material realities. But the converse has always been true with the seekers after God. The pattern of God has been found in the idealism of man. Gods have ever been created in the image and likeness of men. The gods were thus enlarged human beings, to whom were ascribed human actions, except that there was always a tendency to ascribe the best to them. They were ordinarily considered invisible and more mighty

than mankind, otherwise they were not sharply differentiated in attributes and characteristics from men. They had wives, sons, and daughters, and were born and died just like mortals. In short the gods were thoroughly anthropomorphic, and the product of human imagination.

But the Babylonians and Assyrians ascribed the best they knew to the gods. Thus the gods were holy, righteous, pure, faithful, just, truthful, piteous, and merciful, according to the highest current conceptions of these ideas. Their abodes were places of holiness; they were the authors of law; they directed mankind, and determined its destiny; they loved peace; and they cursed and destroyed the wicked. They were not, however, even in those times, considered absolutely perfect. The doing of wrong and evil was ascribed to them, and they were considered subject to repentance.

The people felt themselves directly dependent upon the gods, and divine worship played an important rôle. Temples were built and offerings were constantly made.

It is probable that the holiness ascribed to the gods may have been partly ritual and partly ceremonial; yet as far as the people understood true moral holiness, so they ascribed it to their gods. The oath, for example, was sacred. It was a guarantee of truth, and as such was taken in the name of the gods.

The gods could always be counted upon to be propitious to their suppliants. They were the hearers of prayers; they gave "waters of freedom"; and bestowed



care upon pious deeds; they were the source of righteousness; and they loved to bless their own.

Above everything else the Babylonians and Assyrians loved to think of their gods as righteous and true. From the time of Sargon to that of Ashurbanipal, kings delighted in the title *shar misharim*, king of righteousness, and took pleasure in ascribing that attribute to all the gods, and especially to Shamash and Adad. They themselves gave directions to "hate evil and love right", and ascribe the same desire to the gods. Of course, the Babylonian and Assyrian words may not always have the same content as our words "righteousness" and "truth", but the words *kittu* and *misharu*, which we render by "righteousness" and "truth", are derived from *kanu*, "to be firm", and *eshem*, "to be straight", respectively; and, judging from what was considered "right" and "true", or *kittu* and *misharu*, there is no reason for doubting that the standard was very high. This we shall show in the chapter on Morals.

The Babylonians and Assyrians were polytheists, or at most henotheists. They believed in the existence of innumerable gods and goddesses, all of whom possessed superhuman power and knowledge, but none of whom were omniscient or omnipotent. Each social group believed its own chief deity to be the greatest. This is what is called henotheism. But monotheism, the belief in one universal god, was never reached by the Babylonians and Assyrians, much less ethical monotheism, the belief in one universal, righteous, and holy god.



There is a composition preserved in a Neo-Babylonian copy of an older text, which reads as follows:

“Ea is the Marduk of canals;  
Ninib is the Marduk of strength;  
Nergal is the Marduk of war;  
Zamama is the Marduk of battle;  
Enlil is the Marduk of sovereignty and control;  
Nabu is the Marduk of possession;  
Sin is the Marduk of illumination of the night;  
Shamash is the Marduk of judgments;  
Adad is the Marduk of rain;  
Tishpak is the Marduk of the host;  
Gal is the Marduk of strength;  
Shukamunu is the Marduk of the harvest.”

This text has been taken as a proof that Marduk was considered by the Babylonians as the only god, all other deities being merely manifestations of him. This might be granted if we knew nothing more about the background of culture and religion out of which this composition arose. But, at the same time that men were reading it, the Babylonians were offering prayers and sacrificing to innumerable deities, all distinct, independent, and often rivals of Marduk. The text does nothing more than reflect the political supremacy of Marduk, and remind us that Marduk was the greatest of all Babylonian gods from the time of Hammurapi on. It may even be said to indicate a tendency toward that which resulted in a conception of true monotheism, but the tendency did not go very far.

There is probably to be found in Assyria a pro-founder understanding of the idea of monopoly in the god-head than in Babylonia. Ashur did not stand

alone. There were other deities. But Ashur towered so far above the others; his sway was so much more coterminous with his own country, at least; his cult was so much more independent of external and material representations than that of other deities; and he became so much more transcendentalized, at least in the minds of his people, than was the case with other deities; that if monotheism had been at all developed in Babylonia and Assyria, the chances are that it would have occurred in the latter country. But Babylonians and Assyrians, from the first to the last, were far too nationalistic, far too narrow, far too religiously undeveloped, and far too morally limited, to arrive at any adequate idea of the oneness, perfection, omniscience, and omnipotence of God.

Reviewing the idea of God as we have found it among the Babylonians and Assyrians, it may be said that they continually lifted up their eyes unto the hills from whence their help came; they were not content with peering into the valleys, nor even with appealing to their fellow-men, to nature, or to pleasure; but they felt the necessity of seeking help from the highest source of which they were conscious. They wanted help only from the best and noblest. They believed that the spirits which permeated all natural phenomena held in their power the destinies of men; they believed them to be gods, to be endowed with the highest qualities of which they themselves were conscious. They pinned their faith to them and propitiated them in every possible manner. They loved to think and dream about them, about their character

and manner of living. They ascribed the best they knew to them. But just as the world in which these Babylonians and Assyrians lived consisted of various and diverse national groups, so there were various and diverse gods. They had never arrived at an idea of the world, sufficiently unified to lead them to any idea of the unification in the being of the gods. They developed a remarkable material civilization; their art and architecture, their language and literature, are unsurpassed, in many ways, by those of any ancient, and many modern peoples; and their commercial and legal ideas and institutions have become the common heritage of modern civilization. A higher conception of legal justice has never been developed anywhere. The Code of Hammurapi, the innumerable contracts, and the supremely just commercial transactions which have been preserved to us from Babylonian and Assyrian civilization would put many of our modern Western institutions to shame. But, contrary to Renan's famous dictum, they were not monotheists, nor were they physically constructed, geographically placed, mentally equipped, morally endowed, or spiritually inspired to arrive at such a conception. Culturally they were highly talented, commercially and legally they were unsurpassed in the ancient world, but their moral and religious horizon was considerably limited. The gift of monotheism to humanity came from another source—a politically insignificant, but religiously inspired people—but the world's art and architecture, commerce and law are deeply indebted to the genius of the Babylonians and Assyrians.

### III

## THE IDEA OF MAN IN BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

When Balak wanted Balaam to curse the Israelites who were approaching the domain of Moab, he tried to cheat himself into thinking that if Balaam did not see the whole of the forces of Israel he would be induced to venture a malediction. And so Balak said to Balaam, "Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them. Thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all; and curse me them from thence." But it was a vain expedient. The blessing came still pouring forth more richly than before. The first thing which strikes one in this story is the narrowness of Balak's vision and its lack of absoluteness. There is an absolute truth about everything, something which is certainly the fact about that thing, entirely independent of what people may think about it. No man on earth may know that fact correctly—but the fact exists. It lies behind all blunders and all partial knowledge, a calm, sure, unfound certainty, like the

great sea beneath the waves, like the quiet sky behind its clouds. The infinite God knows it. It, and the possession of it, makes the eternal difference between perfect and partial knowledge.

The Babylonians and Assyrians were Balaks, not intentionally, but on account of conditions and circumstances over which they had no control. In like manner, all primitive peoples are Balaks. The truth of man and the world in which he lives exists, but primitive man's understanding of it is exceedingly limited. Nevertheless, human nature insists upon knowledge even though it be limited and imperfect. The point where the Babylonians and Assyrians stood gave but a partial view of the world and man. But they rightly insisted upon the view, and upon an expression of it.

Our knowledge of what the Babylonians and Assyrians believed about the universe and the beginnings of the race is derived chiefly from a poem of about a thousand lines, called, in the Babylonian language, *Enuma Elish*, and, by modern students, The Epic of Creation; and partly from the Greek writings of a late Babylonian priest, called Berossus.

According to them we learn that the Babylonians and Assyrians believed that in the beginning there existed a great primitive watery chaos. It consisted of three elements, which were personified as Apsu, Tiamat, and Mummu, namely, father, mother, and son. This chaos gave rise to Anshar and Kishar, heaven and earth, the ancestors of the gods Anu, Enlil, and Ea. Tiamat quarrelled with the gods. Open

warfare ensued. Accordingly, Tiamat created eleven monsters of chaos, headed by Kingu, whom she made her husband, and to whom she entrusted the Tablets of Destiny. Ea and Anu succeeded in disposing of Apsu and Mummu, but were unable to seize Tiamat. Marduk of Babylon then intervenes and offers his services against Tiamat, on the condition that if he is victorious he be made chief of the gods. This was agreed upon, and Marduk entered the list against Tiamat, whom he soon vanquished. According to the later form of the story, Marduk cut the corpse of Tiamat in two, out of which he made heaven and earth. Then follow the several acts of creation, the last of which being the creation of man. The Sumerian version makes Aruru, the earth-goddess, the creator of man. She took the blood of Tiamat and mixed it with earth, the result being man. Another account makes Ishtar the creator, and still another makes the Word of Marduk the creative agent. The Epic of Creation, as we have it, closes with a hymn to Marduk as the creator-god. This account evidently arose after the establishment of the supremacy of Babylon and its god, Marduk. A shorter account, and perhaps the earlier, knows nothing of a battle between Marduk and Tiamat, but represents the world as rising out of the ocean without conflict and in a peaceful manner.

Such were the attempts of the early Babylonians to account for the origin of the world and man. It is imperfect and limited, coming from a point in time and place where only a partial view was possible.

But it was an earnest attempt, and as such must be respected.

The Babylonians and Assyrians believed that there existed an order of beings semi-human and semi-divine. The most important and interesting of these was Gilgamesh, whose exploits have been handed down to us in a poem which we call the Gilgamesh Epic.

Gilgamesh was a semi-divine ruler of Uruk. His people tire of him, and pray to the earth-goddess Aruru, who creates Enkidu (Eabani) as a companion for him, who will entice him to leave the city. Enkidu succeeds in his mission, and he and Gilgamesh go on an adventure to the Cedar Mountain in the East. There Ishtar dwells with her servant Humbaba. Enkidu and Gilgamesh look upon Humbaba as unnecessary to their plans, so they slay him. After being reconciled to the death of her bodyguard, Ishtar falls in love with Gilgamesh, and offers her hand in marriage. But Gilgamesh refuses. This enrages the goddess, and she persuades Anu to create an ox to do battle with Gilgamesh; but Gilgamesh with the aid of Enkidu kills the ox. After this, Enkidu makes the mistake of taunting Ishtar about her love affair with Gilgamesh, which results in his death. Gilgamesh, now left alone, bethinks himself of the hero who was rescued from the flood, Utnapishtim, and goes to seek him. He passes over the lofty mountain Mashu, and crosses the great wild steppes, finally reaching the paradise of the gods, situated on the shore of the sea, where he finds the goddess Sabitu sitting on her throne. He makes himself known to her and relates



to her his desires. She is friendly, and directs her ferryman to row him over the "water of death". Finally, Gilgamesh reaches the abode of Utnapishtim, who tells him all about the Flood. While there, Gilgamesh seeks and discovers the plant of life, but on his way home from Utnapishtim a serpent meets him and snatches the plant away. Gilgamesh reaches Uruk a saddened man, but succeeds in getting into touch with his former companion Enkidu, from whom he learns about the realm of the dead.

Another king-story may be seen in the Etana Myth. Etana is a primeval hero, and founder of kingship on earth. He desires to set up a king, and applies, on advice of Shamash, to an eagle for help to bring from heaven a medical herb which shall secure safe birth to the expected king. The eagle consents, and Etana is carried to heaven, but on their return both fall to the ground. However, the child is safely born and becomes king. Another story tells about ten primeval kings between the time of Creation and that of the Flood.

Thus the Babylonians and Assyrians, as well as other primitive peoples, saw in kingship a link between gods and men. At first, the gods themselves reigned over the men on earth, but they were succeeded by semi-divine rulers, who, in turn, were succeeded by a line of human kings. The same conception may be seen back of the account of the antediluvian ancestors in the Book of Genesis.

The essential connection between the life of the gods and the life of man is the great truth of the world, for



“the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord”. And just as the candle obeys the fire, the docile wax acknowledging the subtle flame as its master, so every faithful follower of the gods gives them a chance to utter themselves. There must therefore be a correspondency of nature between the two, man must be in cordial obedience to the gods. The gods are the fire of the world, its vital principle, a warm, pervading presence everywhere. And of this fire the spirit of man is the candle. That is, man is of a nature which corresponds to the nature of the gods, and just so far as man is obedient to the gods, their life, which is spread throughout the universe, gathers itself into utterance. When the fire of the gods has found the candle of the gods, the candle burns clearly and steadily, guiding and cheering instead of bewildering and frightening.

The Babylonians and Assyrians believed as firmly as did the Hebrews that the blood thereof is the life thereof. And when they represented man as created out of the blood of the gods, they meant that he partook of their life. The first man, who was also a king, was semi-divine: he was made of earth mingled with the blood of the gods. The Sumerian word for soul, *zid*, “rush of the wind”, and its Babylonian equivalent *napishtu*, “breath”, both refer to the breath as the seat of the self, even as the Hebrews did, using the same word, *nephesh*, as the Babylonians. But neither the Hebrews nor the Babylonians and Assyrians deny the current belief that the life of man was in his blood.

However, man was created mortal. It was believed to be possible to attain immortality, but only for exceptional persons, such as Utnapishtim and his wife. Adapa received from Ea a high degree of wisdom, but not the gift of immortality. He desired to attain to eternal life, and would have done so had he eaten of the food and water of life that were presented to him by Anu. But, on refusing to do so, he lost that great prize. Immortality was a possession of the gods which they guarded with great jealousy.

The Babylonians and Assyrians had no theory of the origin of sin. There is nothing to be found in their literature which corresponds to the Paradise story of the Old Testament or the *yetzer* theory of later Judaism. The interest of these people was practical rather than metaphysical. They recognized and realized the existence of evil, and assumed, without debate, that it came from the world of spirits which surrounded them. They would not accuse their gods of being the origin of sin; but besides gods there were numerous demons, spiritual and unseen beings from whom came sickness and death, and to whom were ascribed all evil. The "evil eye" was the malevolent glance of a demon. In this respect they were the forerunners of Persian thought. Gods could not originate evil, man did not, but the demons did. When Moses descended from the mountain and found that his brother Aaron had made a golden calf, which the people were worshipping, he became very angry with him and took the calf and destroyed it. Aaron, smarting under the severe reprimand of his brother, does his

best to shift the blame from himself to something else—the fire; and he said to Moses that, having taken the gold and having cast it into the fire, “there came out this calf”. The tendency to shift blame and responsibility is a universal one; nor were the Babylonians and Assyrians immune. The blame for the origin of sin was shifted to the shoulders of demons and evil spirits.

These early peoples were conscious, however, of the fact that sin brought misfortune, and they did all in their power by way of sacrifice, incantation, and magic to remove it. The Flood is an instance of misfortune due to sin. The gods behold the sinfulness of mankind, and decide to send a flood. Ea, the lover of man, reveals the decision of the gods to Utnapishtim, and commands him to build a ship for his safety and the safety of his creatures. Utnapishtim obeys just in time, for the flood breaks forth, the gods themselves flee to heaven for protection, and the mother of the gods and Ea pray for a cessation of the tempest. On the seventh day the storm ceases, and the waters abate, and the ship rests on Mount Nasir. After seven days more, Utnapishtim sends forth from the ship a dove, and then a swallow. Both return. Then he sends forth a raven, which does not return. Dry land appears, and Utnapishtim disembarks and sacrifices to the gods; but not to Enlil who brought on the flood, and who wishes utterly to destroy mankind.

The point to be noted in connection with the Flood story is that it was considered the result of sin, for all suffering resulted in sinfulness. This was an

accepted Babylonian and Assyrian dogma. The sin was not necessarily what we call "moral", it was some act or deed which resulted in the displeasure of the gods and oppression by demons. Demons sent sin. They also sent punishment. But man was to resist the sin which was sent by the demons. Failure to resist it resulted in punishment. But man had the necessary power of resistance. He possessed free will and self respect. These he never surrendered. He was humble in the presence of his gods, listening to what they had to say. He was willing to prostrate himself before them, and to signify his readiness to receive what they should tell him by the complete disowning of anything like worth or dignity in himself. But there is another picture with another truth. There comes a time when a man must stand on his feet; not in the attitude of humiliation but in the attitude of self respect; not stripped of all strength, and lying like a dead man waiting for life to be given him, but strong in the intelligent consciousness of privilege, and standing alive, ready to coöperate with the gods who speak to him.

There is reason to believe that many a Babylonian and Assyrian took this attitude in the presence of his gods, and insisted upon his own dignity. But between him and the demons and evil spirits, the source of all sin and evil, and the bearers of punishment and suffering, there was an endless conflict. And the only assurance of final victory was in the help and protection of the gods.

Individuality was not greatly emphasised in Baby-

lonia and Assyria—at any rate, the average individual did not receive much attention at the hands of the scribe. The mass of extant literature deals with the people as a whole or with certain special individuals, such as the king and the prince, the priest and the exorcist. We know that each man had a personal protective deity, and had developed a somewhat keen sense of his relationship to his god, and of his individual right in commercial matters; but what the details of his rights and privileges, his customs and manners, his ambitions and ideas, were, we are unable to reconstruct with certainty.

It is comparatively easy, however, by the aid of legal and contract literature, to gain a fairly complete view of Babylonian and Assyrian every-day life. Accordingly, we find the family to have been the basis of all social life and activity, and begun with the marriage of two persons. Preparatory to the marriage it was customary to draw up a legal contract; and, before the contract could be entered into, the consent of the parents was required. Without this contract marriage was illegal, for “if a man takes a wife and does not execute contracts for her, that wife is no wife”.

Monogamy seemed to have been the ideal, and to a large extent the standard; but man was permitted to have as many wives as he desired. Concubines and slave-wives were very common at all periods. The marriage relationship could be interrupted in various ways, chiefly by divorce. In the earliest periods the right of divorce belonged only to the man,

but as early as the First Babylonian Dynasty the woman also could bring about a divorce.

The father was the head of the family, and at all periods in Babylonian and Assyrian life held all kinds of extraordinary powers over the members of his family, although they were to some extent restricted. He could divorce his wife at will, often by mere repudiation; he could sell his children, boys as well as girls; and he could disinherit any of them at will. But, on the other hand, he was responsible for the support of his wives and children, and if he divorce the former or disinherit the latter he was liable to full or partial support of them. He could adopt children at will, and name them as his heirs in case of dispute with his own children. But he was generally kind and loving, and assumed the responsibility of family life with earnestness and in good faith.

The wife, on the other hand, had certain rights which she was not slow in demanding. She could repudiate a worthless husband and take her dowry back to her father's house, and if she was viciously slandered she could exact very severe penalties.

Children owed definite duties to their parents, and especially in the case of loyalty, for which if they were found wanting they were severely punished. The Babylonians and Assyrians abhorred filial ingratitude. They were very often responsible for the debts of their parents. But they possessed definite rights of their own. They could claim a patrimony which proceeded from gifts made by the father, and

of which they could dispose freely. If in any way they felt themselves unjustly treated, they had the legal right to protest and to make claims. Orphans were often well provided for, there being evidence that they sometimes received a pension equal to the mother's allowance while she was living.

Obligations of superiors to inferiors and of inferiors to superiors were not neglected. The ideal servant was one who was full of respect for his master, and who always did what was becoming. Even the slave had his rights, and it was permissible for him to enter a lawsuit against his master and to assert his rights. On the other hand, as Urukagina's reform shows, there was often the need of a champion of the weak against the strong, and the fact that this ruler was such shows the keen realization of the rights of the inferior as against the exactions of superiors.

Babylonian and Assyrian society consisted of three classes: the *amelu*, which included the king, the chief officers of state, and landed proprietors; the *mushkenu*, which included the bulk of the subject population; and the *ardu* or slave. At the head stood the king as representative of the gods. In the case of Hammurapi we have an example and model of the ideal king. From the Epilogue and Prologue to his Code we are reminded that he is "the perfect King", "a ruler who is like a real father to his people", he was the doer of right, "the king of righteousness", whose "scepter is righteousness", "who made justice prevail and who ruled the race with right", who "made righteousness to shine forth on the land", who "established



law and justice in the land and promoted the welfare of the people", whose ideal was a "peaceful country" and "pure judgment", and who "brought about plenty and abundance". In short, the king was considered perfect and as such was honoured with titles which actually related him to the gods. He was, thus, the son of the god, and sometimes, as in the case of Hammurapi, was supplicated and revered almost like a god. Hammurapi was undoubtedly an exceptional king, who was not only himself a righteous ruler, but who also expressed the wish that his successors would be as righteous and as vigilant in rooting out the wicked and evildoer from the land as he was.

The king was the fountain of all law, and from him radiated the power which set in motion the machinery of the state. He gave directions for the levying of taxes and tribute and through him the state controlled business and commerce.

The king was the champion of the oppressed individual, and was ever active in righting any wrong that may have been done to him. He opposed the oppression of the weak by the strong, and he held his officials to the duty of observing the same standard of righteousness. He set his face against official corruption, against greed in business, and against robbery and theft. To assist him in the administration of the state he created an army of officials whose benefices were inalienable from the official line.

The state likewise took an interest in the individual, and ransomed a man if neither he himself nor the temple could do so. The state was in such matters



an agent of the king, just as the temple was. This interest was a duty to which the individual was fully alive. In fact, the individual in Babylonia and Assyria was as much alive to his personal interests as at any other period of the world's history.

The individual though strictly classified was nevertheless carefully guarded in his rights. Thus if a rich man stole, the deed was punished in the light of his riches, that is, he had to pay more in compensation than if a poor man stole. Yet if a poor man had nothing to pay for such an offence he was to be put to death. In like manner, the fine for a quarrel between two nobles was larger than if it had been between two poor men; but it should also be noticed that if a man of noble class made an assault upon a poor man he was taxed less than if the assault had been upon one of his own class. If a member of the middle class made an assault upon a noble the assault was punished by being publicly beaten.

The individual was treated in every way as thoroughly responsible. He was free to make gifts, with, of course, the consent of those interested; he had the right to protest against injustice; and his slanderer was punished with death. On the other hand, the individual was held responsible for his acts. A royal official who secretly hired a substitute when he was sent on an errand was put to death, and the substitute received the office. The law was the great safeguard and ruled that important statements must be made on oath in the presence of witnesses, and if witnesses could not be produced the man was assumed to be a

liar. Even contracts to guard against falsehood were drawn up.

The Babylonians and Assyrians were primarily a law-abiding people. The will of the gods was expressed in the law of the land, and the king was its guardian. The law was assumed to be righteous, because it was so bound up with the idea of the righteousness of the gods. And so it came about that the court was usually the temple where lawsuits were tried and contracts were made. And yet injustice was sometimes known in the very courts of law, although whenever discovered it was punished. The judge rendered judgment according to royal law, but once the judgment was rendered it could not be changed without incurring severe punishment. There were different grades of judges, but the chief distinction was between civil and temple judges. The former could not receive an affidavit; this was due to the religious character of the oath. Bribery was often attempted but it was always punished. But in case a man was not satisfied with the decision rendered against him he had the right to appeal to the king.

Although the settlement of a dispute may be made out of court, lawsuits before legally constituted judges were the rule. Three witnesses were always necessary, an oath was taken, and rewards and punishments directed. Punishments were often exceedingly severe and out of proportion to the offence. Thus, death was the penalty for: perjury in a capital suit, false accusation of killing, theft of things belonging to the temple or the palace of a king, buy-

ing property of a man without witnesses or contracts, or receiving such property on deposit, failure to pay fines for theft or to make restitution, theft and sale of stolen goods, false accusation of stealing, house-breaking, brigandage, theft, kidnapping a free-born child, negligence if ending in death, allowing a palace slave to escape or sheltering him, detaining an escaped slave, causing a barber to mark a slave wrongfully, procuring a substitute, in the case of a soldier, fraud on the part of a district governor, oppression, failure of a woman who sold wine to capture a criminal, opening a wine house by a devotee, accepting a low tariff by a wine woman, infidelity and incest, remarrying on the part of a woman while her husband was absent, repudiation of her husband by a disreputable woman, inability to pay by a tenant farmer, and falsely accusing a man of laying a spell upon another.

Severe mutilation was legally inflicted. Thus, a boy's tongue was cut out who denied his parents, a son's eye was put out who abandoned his foster parents, a nurse who substituted a child for the one who died while in her care lost her breasts, a son who struck his father lost his hand, and a slave who struck a freeman's son lost his ear.

The *lex talionis* was very common, especially for injuries inflicted unintentionally. It was appealed to chiefly as a preventative. The ordeal by water was practised.

Babylonian and Assyrian justice has a commercial aspect in our judgment, *e. g.*, a patrician had to pay three times as much in case of theft as a plebeian,

but the penalty for injuring a patrician was more than that for injuring a plebeian. Although the fact that a surgeon's fee was greater for a patrician than for a plebeian seems thoroughly modern.

Much care was taken to fix and define ownership of property. Property rights were possessed by all classes of people and by women and children as well as by men. The law controlled buying and selling, renting and letting, redeeming and sharing, but a royal charter could dispense from various obligations. A sharp distinction was made between real and personal property.

Trade and business were placed on a firm legal basis. Sales, purchases, endowments, commissions, loans, inheritance, wills, settlements, gifts, and all kinds of contracts, were legal transactions usually made in the presence of witnesses and often accompanied by an oath. Business companies were legally formed, who commissioned agents and carried on foreign as well as domestic trade. Exact accounts were kept and profits were strictly shared and distributed, and the power of attorney was recognized. Orders were honoured and legal receipts were given. A debt was legally binding, the lender possessing the right of cancellation, except where the debt was due to storm, flood, or drought, when there was an automatic abatement. Goods could be accepted in lieu of money or corn for debt. Rates of sale and storage were often settled by law, and neglect to make satisfaction in business matters was promptly punished.

The bulk of labour in Babylonia and Assyria was

done by slaves, although there were freemen, especially freed slaves, who were labourers. Slaves were acquired by gift or inheritance, by capture or by purchase. They were treated as property, sold, hired, loaned, acquired by inheritance or gift, and listed like other property. The wages of a slave were always paid to his master. A female slave (*a-ma-at*) was acquired in the same way as a male slave and could be sold and exchanged and given or taken in marriage. She could become the wife of a freeman, in which case the children were free, and her marriage was a legal one.

A freeman was responsible for the support of his slave. A slave could be adopted as a son, the ceremony being a religious one with an elaborate ritual. The names of the real parents of a slave are never given. Slaves were often freed, when they assumed all the rights of a freeman. The freeing of a slave was a religious ceremony. One word translated "to free", *u-da-am-mi-ku-si-ma*, means purified; another expression is *pu-zu u-li-il*, "cleanse his forehead". A captive slave if brought home is freed from his slavery. A freed slave was obliged to support his father during his lifetime, but after that the children of the master had no claim upon the former slave; a freed female slave could enter a convent and be dedicated to a god.

If a freed slave repudiated his foster father he was punished as a freeman, but if a slave repudiated his master, he lost an ear. If a slave wife repudiated her husband's mother, the mother could brand her and sell her.

The penalty imposed upon a slave for injuring a freeman was severe, in one instance his ear being cut off, but still more severe was the penalty imposed upon a man who abducted a slave.

The lot of the slave was hard, but, as we have seen, he had certain well-defined rights, and he could engage in business by agreeing to pay a fair percentage of his profit to his master.

It has always and everywhere been considered greatly to the advantage of a nation to be at peace with its neighbours, and to this end treaties were often made. At the very dawn of Sumerian history there is evidence of a treaty between the chiefs of neighbouring states, and throughout Sumeria's history there are many references to the formation of treaties, one of the most famous being that described on the Stela of the Vultures between Lagash and Umma. The power of treaty making was considered always to belong to the deity. The chiefs made the treaty, but it was always in the name of their gods.

An essential part of the ritual of a treaty was the oath which was taken in the name of the gods and sometimes in that of the king. The oath was a conditional malediction, and violation of a treaty entailed not only a curse, but was also visited with severe punishments.

Wars were of very frequent occurrence in early Sumeria, because of the many small and independent city-states which were so near to one another that their interests were always clashing. An interesting example of almost continuous conflict between two

such states is that of Umma and Lagash. The conqueror was very often cruel and gloried in leaving the bones of the enemy to bleach in the open field.

All wars were religious, for the Sumerians always believed that they fought under the direction and advice of their gods. When one city made war upon another it was because their gods were at feud. The destruction of the enemy was often ascribed to the actual agency of their deity, and plundering was carried out at the god's command. The foe was considered unconsecrated and ritually unclean, and a foreign land was a wicked one. Yet, they could be merciful, if the dead seen on the Stela of the Vultures be not only their own but also those of the enemy.

There is practically nothing known about how the Sumerians treated an individual stranger or foreigner, like the *ger* among the Hebrews. From the foreigner's point of view, exile was never contemplated with any degree of pleasure, but that would be natural.

Between Babylonia and surrounding countries there was a good deal of peaceful intercourse. It was the boast of Kudur-Marduk of Elam that he had never done evil (*mi-im-ma*) to Larsa and to Emutabal but did what pleased Shamash. It was the desire of all Babylon kings to carry on peaceful trade and commerce with foreign peoples, for they desired nothing more than an opportunity to develop their material resources. On the other hand, warlike relations between nations were the normal state of affairs. Even Hammurapi who was a lover of the peaceful arts was often involved in war, especially with his fa-



mous contemporary, Rim-Sin of Ur, and each king appealed to his gods for aid against his opponent.

Levies were made especially upon labourers to carry on foreign wars, and the punishment was death for a person to harbour a slacker. These wars were the source of much plunder, especially of foreigners, who were sold as slaves, and large sums of money were paid by the opposing sides for the redemption of important prisoners.

Resident aliens, however, were usually treated with consideration and could become citizens, being under no disabilities.

In Assyria's warlike literature there is little room for peaceful sentiments, although there is no trace of political disability on the part of foreigners in Assyria, and oaths that bound Assyria to a foreign country in treaty were inviolable. However, Assyria was a great war-like country. She gloried in her armies and conquests. Her great war-gods, Ashur and Ishtar, gave her all victory. All war was religious. It was to enhance the power of the gods, and to extend their boundaries.

The army was recruited from all ranks, especially from serfs and slaves, the military unit being the bowman and his pikeman and shield-bearer. There is abundant evidence to show that the Assyrian kings and their armies were exceedingly cruel in battle. Corpses of enemies were mutilated, their lands were sowed with salt, heads of the slain were exhibited in piles outside the cities, and gathered to be counted by royal officials. Although the kings were sometimes



merciful, they loved to boast of great cruelties and inhumanity. Assyria was militaristic to the core, she exulted in conquest and in all the cruelties which were believed to be capable of striking terror into the hearts of her enemies.

In Babylonia and Assyria men believed in the existence of numerous gods, some more powerful than others, some good and some bad. The great gods were considered, as a rule, favorable to man, but the Igigi were most hostile. The king was the protégé of the gods, being defended by them; and from them, the source of all justice, he derived his authority. The gods not only created man, but they were the source of all stability. Their mouths were pure and could not "be altered". The gods were the real judges, kings and human judges being their representatives. The greatest of all the divine judges was Shamash, the establisher of right and justice, the judge of heaven and earth, and with him was associated Adad.

The gods were very anthropomorphically conceived, and were created as well as human beings; they had their jealousies and other limitations and were subject to decay and death.

Faith in the gods was universal, and men continually appealed to them. There is considerable evidence that the individual Babylonian appealed directly to his god or goddess. Such expressions as "thou from whom cometh the life of all people" are not to be taken as evidence of monotheism, but only as examples of the confidence which individuals had in the particular deity to whom they were for the time

being directing their supplications. Very often in just such expressions, the suppliant shows his consciousness of the existence of other gods, *e. g.*, one prays, "O Sin, as the first-born of Bel, no equal hast thou." Nor is the expression, "who can comprehend the ways of god", to be taken as monotheistic. The most powerful or most popular god was often addressed as if he were "god" without implying thereby the non-existence of other deities.

The gods were not only supplicated, they were also adored and praised as the source of all help, comfort, compassion, and strength.

There was a very close and intimate relation existing between king and gods. In most ancient times, it was believed that the gods really reigned as kings on earth, and so, in later times, they were often addressed as "king". Then the time came when the king was considered the very offspring of the gods, but by the first Babylonian dynasty such a belief was considered fictitious, the king being the servant of the gods. Hammurapi believed that he was called by the gods to enlighten the land and to further the welfare of the people, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, to destroy the wicked and the evil, and to cause justice to prevail in the land. He was the especial protégé of Shamash, who endowed him with justice and to whom he was obedient. He, however, was pious and suppliant to all the great gods, being their faithful servant and worshipper, and to whom he ascribed all his might.

In return for divine favours, the Babylonian and

Assyrian kings assumed a supreme interest in the temple and its worship. Hammurapi brought abundance to Egissirgal and made prosperous the shrines of Malkat. Sometimes the temples were called upon to ransom a man who had been taken captive, and sometimes the king forced loans from the temple, but the latter was considered wrong, and the former was done only because of the great wealth possessed by the temples, in itself a proof of their popularity. The house of the god was the home of justice and the place of prayer, of sacrifice, and of praise. Any violation of the temple's rights was looked upon with displeasure, and theft therefrom was punished with death. This was, however, the punishment for all burglary.

As the gods were the source of all justice, so in their name were all oaths taken and maledictions uttered. The sinner was in constant dread of the gods who hated sin and punished wrong.

It is, however, just the ordinary man of whom we should like to know more, for he has his own peculiar interest. He is significant because of his insignificance. He interests us because he presents the type to which we almost all belong. He ought to be interesting also because he represents so much the largest element in universal human life. The average man is by far the most numerous man. The man who goes beyond the average, the man who falls short of the average, both of them, by their very definition, are exceptions. They are the outskirts and fringes, the capes and promontories of humanity. The great continent

of human life is made up of the average existences, the mass of two-talented capacity and action. The great multitudes of men are neither very rich nor very poor. The real character and strength of a community lies neither in its millionaires nor in its paupers but in the men of middle life, who neither have more money than they know how to spend nor are pressed and embarrassed for the necessities of life. The same is true in the matter of joy and sorrow. The great mass of men during the greater part of their lives are neither exultant and triumphant with delight, nor are they crushed and broken with grief. They do not go shouting their rapture to the skies, and they do not go wailing their misery to the sympathetic winds. They are moderately happy. Or if we consider mental capacity, most men are neither sages nor fools. Or if we think about learning, few men are either scholars or dunces. Or if we consider popularity and fame, those whom the whole world praises and those whom all men despise are both of them exceptional. We can count them easily. The great multitude whom we cannot begin to count, who fill the vast middle-ground of the great picture of humanity, is made up of men who are simply well enough liked by their fellow-men.

And when we come to the profounder and the more personal things, to character and religion, there, too, it is the average man that fills the eye. Where are the heroes? We find them if we look. Where are the rascals? We find them too. Where are the saints? They shine where no true man's eye can

fail to see them. But as to the great host of men, we know how little reason they give us to expect of them either great goodness or great wickedness.

These are the men of Babylonia and Assyria of whom we should like to know more—men whose lot was not the highest, nor whose misfortune was the greatest, but the rank and file of their day. We can imagine them obedient to their over-lords, kind to their families, and reverent to their gods. Into that busy commercial life so characteristic of Babylonia and Assyria we should like to get a peep. Those men who fought their battles with so much vigour, did their business with so much method, and served their gods with so much elaboration, we should like to study. Perhaps the future has more surprises in store for us. Less than a hundred years ago men could not imagine the vast areas of human endeavour upon which the work of the archaeologist and student of culture and religion have thrown light. Little was known of Babylonia and Assyria then, and far less of Sumeria. Now we can trace their military campaigns, read their poems, study their laws, and contemplate their religious visions. With the passage of Mesopotamia into the hands of a responsible and sympathetic government, and with the careful sifting of the sands of the Babylonian and Assyrian deserts, it is not possible to limit the extent of further information, about these ancient peoples, that may be forthcoming.

But in spite of our fragmentary information, we know enough to be able to state that the ideal of the early inhabitants of the Tigris-Euphrates valley was

a very high one. They considered themselves offspring of the gods, endowed with high mental and spiritual capacities, responsible for the welfare of the race, and possessed of the capacity for endless development. Such was man as he laboured and toiled, sowed and reaped, loved and hated, thought and dreamed in the mighty empires that were once Babylonia and Assyria.

## IV

### THE IDEA OF MEDIATION IN BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

The consciousness of wrongdoing is, and has always been, a universal experience among men. The belief that wrongdoing is an offense against the gods is its corollary. In fact, wrongdoing is an offense only because it is displeasing to the gods. When David said, "I have sinned against the Lord", or when the Babylonian penitent enumerated all the wrongdoings he could think of in order to locate the cause of his god's displeasure at him, he testified to the truth of this principle that all sin is an offense against god, yea, even is sin just because it is an offense against god. All this assumes that man believes in the existence of the gods, and in his necessary relationship to him. And with that assumed, the first step in the conscious relationship between man and god is the expression of merit or fault on the part of man in respect to god. The next step is the full acknowledgment of the true moral character of the relationship. And then follows the full acknowledgment that merit or fault is pleasing or offensive to god.

With the consciousness of a moral relationship with the gods, and of a necessary dependence upon them, and obligation toward them, man immediately becomes concerned with the problem of mediation, that is, with the question of how he is to be represented in the presence of the gods. Now there are two elements involved in the idea of mediation. They are, gods and man—man conscious of his relationship to and dependence upon the gods, desirous of help; and the gods, presumably able, ready, and willing to help. Between these two elements comes the mediatorial power, for the ancient never trusted himself to appear directly before his god. He believed in the necessity of a mediator.

Among the Babylonians and Assyrians the chief mediator between man and god was the king. This was so because the kings were believed to be the offspring of the gods. In fact, the first earthly king was a veritable god, and represented the great gods upon earth. Such a rôle was probably played by Ea of Eridu, and by the prophet-god Nabu. The persistence of this idea in later times is seen in the insistence of some penitents to appeal to specific gods to intercede for them to other gods. When the gods retired to their heavenly home, they left as their representatives certain semi-divine beings, who were rulers of men, and mediators between men and the gods. Such semi-divine rulers were Gilgamesh of Uruk, two-thirds god and one-third man, who was a great and energetic ruler; Azag-Bau, queen and founder of the city of Kish; Sargon of Agade, whose mother



was a priestess, but whose father was a god; and others, such as Adapa, Etana, and probably Tammuz.

The rule of these semi-divine kings was followed by human dynasties. But all the characteristics, privileges, and obligations of these rulers were transferred to their successors. The fundamental duty of a semi-divine ruler was mediation, and that became the first obligation of his human successor. The Babylonian and Assyrian monarch was primarily a representative of the gods upon earth; he often took the title *dingir*, or *ilu*, god; he was the "son of god"; he was at first the only offerer of gifts, of sacrifices, to the gods; and he was the sole priest and only mediator.

The Babylonians and Assyrians had never developed a belief in angels and demons, as mediators. They believed in good and evil spirits. There were good and evil spirits. There were good spirits, or minor protective deities, called *ilu amelu*, personal god, *ilu biti*, house god, and *ilu ali*, city god, and every house had its *shedu* and *lamassu*, protective spirits. All these acted as protectors against the spirits of evil. Demons were sometimes inferior gods, the spirits of the unburied dead, disembodied ghosts, or semi-divine creatures or goblins. They were often represented in groups of seven. But neither demons nor good spirits ever acted as mediators between gods and men. The evil spirits were the source of all suffering and sickness, and the office of the good spirits was to counteract them. A man may be possessed by a good spirit, when health and happiness and prophetic power results; but he was also subject to possession

by a demon, in which case, sickness and suffering resulted. In fact, sickness was thought of in terms of demoniacal possession, and there was a demon for almost every phase of sickness, just as in modern days there is a germ for every type of disease.

Nor did the tendency in Babylonia to personify the word of the gods, as creative power, result in a mediator. The only line of mediatorial power was through divine beings, semi-divine beings, and the king as "son of god", and as priest and representative of the people. But with the creation of larger groups of people into national life, and the multiplication of kingly duties, the king's office as priest had to be delegated to representatives. This resulted in the establishment of priests and of a priesthood. But still the king remained priest *par excellence*. This statement is borne out by many facts as well as by the title which designated the king, namely *patesi*, or "priest prince". The king was primarily a priest (*patesi* is the Sumerian equivalent of the Semitic word *ishshakku*, from which the word *shangu*, priest, is derived) and representative of the gods to mankind. The representatives of the priest-prince were priests.

The light of the body is the eye, and the eye of the human soul is that which enables man to see god. The one appointed channel through which man and the gods, the two halves of the universe, came into contact was the priesthood. The priesthood, as a power of mediation between man and god, was the eye of the soul. Without the physical eye the world might still be real; but it will be forever unknowable

to the man sitting in his prison of sightlessness, where all the glory cannot reach him. But let the window of his eye be opened and it all comes pouring in; runs through his frame and finds out his intelligence; says to his brain, "Here I am, know me!"; says to his heart, "Here I am, love me!" To such a man the whole bright world has sprung to life; and the window of his prison, the gateway of the entering glory, the light of the body, is the eye.

So with the unseen, invisible, spiritual world. That world, too, must and can testify itself, report itself to the human intelligence through its appropriate channel of communication and mediation, just as the world of visible nature manifests and reports itself through the organ of the eye. Now it is just the existence of that spiritual world, and the possibility of man's being in communication with it, intelligently knowing it, intelligently loving it—that it is about which man's profoundest hopes and fears have always clustered, about which they are clustering to-day, perhaps more anxiously than ever. It is a world which has always been conceivable. All man's mental history bears witness that he can picture to himself a world in which the gods dwell. The bridge, then, which was thought capable of connecting the world of gods with the world of men, the eye through which man could see god, was the mediatorial power of the priesthood.

The development of kingship, the title of the early Babylonian kings, and the regalia of the king, especially his tall tiara or mitre with long, flowing cords, all point to the priestly office and character of the

king. But with the development of community life it was physically impossible for the king to perform all the required priestly rites. He consequently delegated his priestly power, without surrendering any of his own priestly rights, to a class of men, who were given the title of the same meaning and content as that which he himself bore, namely *shangu*, "priest".

With the passage of time this class of men waxed numerous and powerful, and were divided into many orders with many titles. When a strong king sat on the throne, the power and influence of the priesthood were held in check, but weak kings were often the mere puppets of the priests, who gained more and more power, and established more and more priestly precedents. At last they became hereditary, the office descending from father to son; they were highly educated; they usurped political power; and sometimes became very corrupt, politically, insomuch that Urukagina, for example, was forced to bring about a sweeping reform of the priesthood.

At the head of any local priesthood stood the high priest, *shangu rabu*, *shangu dannu*, or *shangu mahhu*. He was called "lord", and was invested by the king himself. In subordination to him were many orders, chief of which were: the *Mashu* or *Mashashu*, whose duties were primarily connected with ritual and ceremonies, a kind of master of ceremonies, and the *Urukallu*, a master of ceremonies for evening services; the *Pashishu*, or anointers, with a minor order called the *Kisallah*; the *Naru*, the musician priest *par excellence*, a kind of canon-precentor, and the *Surru*, a

chief canon-precentor; the *Baru*, or seer, with his assistant, the *Abarakku*; the *Ashipu*, the incantation priest, an order which became very powerful, who held the sacred books of incantation lore, and who derived their wisdom from Ea, the god of wisdom; and their assistant, the *Asu* priest who specialized in water incantations; the *Kalu* priest, who directed lamentations and prepared astrological reports; the *Shailu*, or interpreter of dreams; and the *Sukkallu*, messenger or deacon. Then there was the *Gallabu*, or priestly tonsure cutter; and there were other minor orders. There were also priestesses—as many as twenty orders, two-thirds as many orders as that of the priesthood—and in addition, there were many classes of persons devoted to and engaged in the service of the gods. There were vestal virgins; there were teachers; there were priestly judges; there were astrologers and physicians; and there were priestly scribes. In short, there was no profession of influence and importance which had not at some period or other come under the sway of the priesthood.

Many of these orders demanded that a candidate for the priesthood must be of noble birth, of priestly blood, perfect in bodily growth, and learned in all branches of science. Before ordination, the candidate was clean shaven, as a part of the rite, the king sometimes performing this important act; and was presented with a tiara, the symbol of his priestly office. After ordination, the priest was obliged to wear a distinct dress—a fringed cloak, reaching to the feet, with right arm uncovered—he was to go barefooted,

and to assume the tonsure. A special tithe was instituted for the priesthood, and fees were demanded for all important services.

Man rarely appears before his god empty-handed. He generally desires something, and in order to be sure of the good will of his god he presents a gift. The gift usually took the form of an animal—sometimes, on very serious occasions, a human being—which was killed, and either completely consumed by fire, or roasted and eaten, the gods receiving a share. This was called a sacrifice. Thus the regular accompaniment, or means of mediation, became a sacrifice. And, when the office was delegated to the priesthood, sacrifice was the means of operation.

The earliest idea of a sacrifice was that of communion. Men and their god joined together in a sacred meal, and partook of a sacred animal, in whose veins had run the blood common to gods and man, that is, the life of gods and man. The object of the sacred meal was to strengthen that bond of relationship between man and the gods by partaking of the common life. It was only later that the idea of sacrifice as a gift to the gods arose, and still later the idea of a gift was translated into terms of a temple due.

The chief materials used in sacrifice were: oxen, sheep, domestic-animals, fowl, fish, wild-animals, bread, wine, water, mead, honey, butter, milk, oil, grain, fruit, flour, cane, myrtle, and cedar and cypress wood.

Many elaborate sacrificial services were developed,

and liturgies to correspond with them. One of the most important forms of sacrifice was the sin-offering, which was considered very efficacious. The special gods to whom this offering was made were almost always Ea, Shamash, and Marduk. The ceremony was later connected with the *Shiptu*, or incantation ceremony. The rite was very elaborate, the chief feature being cleansing. An altar was erected in the open air, a lamb was sacrificed, with dates, meal, honey, butter, and wine, and incense was freely used. Manual acts were numerous, including bowings and prostrations. The so-called sacrifice to the dead was the *Kispu*, from the verb *kasapu*, "to leave remains of food for the dead". This rite was a gift-offering to the spirits of the dead, and not a sacrifice in the strict sense of the term. The dead were not worshipped, the purpose being merely to furnish them with food. Associated with this last rite were services of lamentation and mourning for the dead, which were purely ritual exercises without any element of worship.

The great central act of worship was the sacrifice, and the bond, which was renewed, was that life common to man and to the gods. This was no mere symbolism, at least to the earliest Babylonians and Assyrians. There was no doubt in their minds about the reality of the divine relationship between men, animals, and the gods. The same blood ran through the veins of all of them. In the blood was life, and the partaking thereof, and of that in which the blood existed, the flesh, constituted a partaking of the common life, and a strengthening of that common



bond. To the Babylonian and Assyrian mind a sacrifice was a great and solemn reality. Even the meal-sacrifice was interpreted in the same way, but was not considered as worthy. The reason for Yahweh's discrimination between Cain and Abel was that Abel offered an animal sacrifice, while Cain's was a meal-sacrifice. But the sacrifice was the central act of worship, and the normal mode of mediation between gods and men.

Nor were these sacrifices offered in a gloomy silence, as if the people were doing a hard duty which they would not do if they could help it; but with a burst of jubilant joy and with songs of gladness which rang down through the crowded courts of the temple, the host of the Babylonians and Assyrians claimed for themselves anew their place in the obedience of their gods. The act of sacrifice was done amid a chorus of delight.

To us such a sacrifice, beautiful and inspiring as it may be, would be only a symbol, because the things which the childhood of the race values are the symbols or types of the things which the manhood of the race learns to value. The man does not want the boy's sports because he has found in the serious work of life the true field for those emulations and activities which were only practising and trying themselves in the play-ground. The man can do without the boy's perpetual physical activity, because he has come to the pleasures of an active mind which the restlessness of the child's body, in his pleasure in mere movement, anticipated and prophesied. It seems as if



the change from boyhood into a true manhood could not be more justly described than as an advance from dealing with symbols to dealing with realities. And if, then, every progress in life is a change from some new boyhood to some yet riper manhood; if every man is a child to his own possible maturer self; may it not be truly stated that all the spiritual advances of life are advances from some symbol to its reality, and that the abandoned interests and occupations which strew the path which the world has travelled are the symbols which it has cast away because it had grasped the realities for which they stood? Even so, although there are now no more smoking altars or bleeding beasts among civilized men, we can nevertheless look back to the childhood of the race, and see how real those things were to them, which we now look upon as mere symbols of the true. They were the school-masters leading mankind to higher things.

The most naïve conceptions of prayer are possible to polytheists, who can have no doubts about the efficacy of prayer, for no such problems arise as those with which monotheists are troubled. Where there are many gods it is reasonable to suppose that one may be able to outwit or over-rule another. But even so, many Babylonian and Assyrian prayers gave expression to a very elevated and noble religious and ethical point of view. Lugalzaggisi, king of Sumer, about 2800 B. C. prayed thus to his god Enlil: "O Enlil, king of lands, may Anu to his beloved father speak my prayer; to my life may he add life, and cause the lands to dwell in security." Nebuchadrezzar,

king of Babylon, about 585 B. C. addressed his god Marduk with the following beautiful prayer:

“O eternal prince! Lord of all being!  
The king whom thou lovest, and  
Whose name thou hast declared  
To be pleasing to thee—  
Do thou lead aright his name,  
Guide him in a straight path.  
I am thy prince, thy favourite,  
The work of thy hand;  
Thou hast created me, and  
Hast entrusted me  
With dominion over all people.  
According to thy favour, O Lord,  
Which thou dost bestow  
Upon all people,  
Cause me to love thy exalted lordship,  
And create in my heart  
The worship of thy divinity.  
Grant me whatever is pleasing to thee,  
Because thou hast fashioned my life.”

In this prayer the ideal has surely been reached. The king prays not that his will be done, but that his god might grant him “whatever is pleasing to thee”. Sometimes a prayer takes the form of a penitential psalm rich in beauty and worship, and deep in ethical thought. Thus a suppliant prays to Ishtar:

“I, thy servant, full of sighs, call upon thee.  
The humble prayer of him who has sinned do thou accept.  
If thou lookest upon a man, that man liveth,  
O mighty mistress of mankind,  
Merciful one to whom it is good to turn, who accepts sighs.”

Perhaps the best of these psalms is an anonymous

prayer to be addressed to any deity. It is full of rich religious sentiment and high moral discernment:

"The anger of the lord, may it be appeased.

The god that I know not, be appeased.

The goddess that I know not, be appeased.

The god, known or unknown, be appeased.

The heart of my god, be appeased.

The heart of my goddess, be appeased.

The anger of the god and of my goddess, be appeased.

The god, who is angry against me, be appeased.

A transgression against a god I knew not, I have committed.

A transgression against a goddess I knew not, I have committed.

A gracious name, may the god I knew not, name.

A gracious name, may the goddess I knew not, name.

A gracious name, may the god known or unknown, name.

The pure food of my god have I unwittingly eaten.

The clear water of my goddess I have unwittingly drunken.

The taboo of my god I have unwittingly eaten.

To an offense against my goddess I have unwittingly walked.

O lord, my transgressions are many, great are my sins,

My god, my transgressions are many, great are my sins,

O goddess, known or unknown, my transgressions are many, great are my sins,

The transgression that I have committed, I know not,

The sin that I have wrought, I know not.

The taboo, that I have eaten, I know not.

The offense, into which I walked, I know not.

The lord, in the wrath of his heart, has regarded me.

The god, in the anger of his heart, has surrounded me.

The goddess, who is angry against me, hath made me like a sick man,

A god, known or unknown, hath oppressed me,

A goddess, known or unknown, has wrought me sorrow.

I sought for help, but none took my hand,

I wept, but none came to my side,  
I cried aloud, and there was none that heard me.  
I am full of trouble, overpowered, and dare not look up.  
To my merciful god I turn, I utter my prayer,  
The feet of my goddess I kiss, I touch them,  
To the god, known or unknown, I turn, I utter my prayer.  
To the goddess, known or unknown, I turn, I utter my  
prayer.

O lord, turn thy face to me, receive my prayer.

O goddess, turn graciously to me, receive my prayer.

O god, known or unknown, turn thy face to me, receive  
my prayer.

O goddess, known or unknown, turn graciously to me,  
receive my prayer.

How long, O my god, let thy heart be appeased.

How long, O my goddess, let thy heart be appeased.

O god, known or unknown, let thy heart's anger return to  
its place.

O goddess, known or unknown, let thy hostile heart return  
to its place.

Mankind are foolish, and there is none that knoweth.

So many are they—who knoweth aught?

Whether they do evil or good, no one knoweth.

O lord, cast not away thy servant.

In the waters of mire he lies, seize his hand!

The sins, that I have done, turn to a blessing.

The transgression, which I have committed, may the wind  
bear away.

My manifold transgressions strip off like a garment.

O my god, my transgressions are seven times seven, forgive  
my transgressions.

O my goddess, my transgressions are seven times seven,  
forgive my transgressions.

O god, known or unknown, my transgressions are seven  
times seven, forgive my transgressions.

O goddess, known or unknown, my transgressions are  
seven times seven, forgive my transgressions,

Forgive my transgression, for I humble myself before thee.

Thy heart, like a mother's, may it return to its place,  
Like a mother that hath borne children, like a father that  
hath begotten them, may it turn again to its place."

Prayers were both private and public. In public services prayers became rather liturgical and stereotyped. They were usually written for the occasion, and were chanted or sung by priests and people. The following is a verse of a typical liturgical prayer:

"Oh, heart, repent; oh heart, repose, repose.  
Oh, heart of Anu, repent, repent.  
Oh, heart of Enlil, repent, repent."

But individual prayers, sometimes liturgical, but more often private, said on all occasions—for the Babylonians and Assyrians were a very pious people—developed from a primitive form of divine adulation, to a high place of noble religious and ethical expression. Although they are surcharged with petty worldly interests, and gross magical conceptions, they very often show a penetration into ethical distinctions and a deep sense of the goodness, justice, and holiness of the gods that is quite remarkable.

There were also hymns, remarkable for their religious and ethical teaching, although many of them were marred by pure magical formulae. This class of religious composition is very hard to date, though the best hymns are certainly comparatively late. Hymns were addressed to the various gods, usually to one specified deity at a time. The great gods, such as Sin, Shamash, Marduk, and Nabu, are the most frequently supplicated deities in this class of liter-

ature. Sometimes hymn, prayer, and incantation are blended into one, for example, a hymn to Ishtar, in which beautiful religious thought passes into magic and incantation :

"I pray unto thee, sovereign of sovereigns, goddess of goddesses,

Ishtar, queen of all men, directress of mankind.

O Irini, O exalted one, mistress of the Igigi,

Thou art mighty, thou art queen, thy name is exalted.

Thou art the light of heaven and earth, O valiant daughter of Sin,

Directing arms, establishing combat,

Framing all laws, bearing the crown of dominion.

O lady, thy greatness is majestic, exalted above all the gods.

Star of lamentation, who makest hostility among brethren at peace,

Making them abandon friendship

For a friend. O lady of victory, making my desire impetuous,

O Gushea, who art covered with battle, who art clothed with fear,

Thou dost perfect destiny and decision, the law of earth and heaven.

Sanctuaries, shrines, divine dwellings, and temples worship thee.

Where is thy name not heard? Where not thy decree?

Where are thy images not made? Where are thy temples not founded?

Where art thou not great? Where art thou not exalted?

Anu, Bel, and Ea have exalted thee, among the gods have they increased thy dominion,

Thou judgest the cause of men with justice and right,

Thou regardest the violent and destructive, thou directest them every morning.

I invoke thee, I, sorrowful, sighing, suffering,

Look upon me, O my lady, and accept my supplication.  
 Pity me in truth, and hearken unto my prayer.  
 Speak deliverance unto me, let thy heart be appeased.  
 How long shall my body lament, full of troubles and disorders?  
 How long shall my heart be afflicted, full of sorrow and sighing?  
 How long shall my omens be sad, troubled, and confused?  
 How long shall my house be troubled, pouring forth complaints?  
 Put an end to the evil bewitchments of my body, that I may see thy clear light.  
 How long, O my lady, shall the ravenous demon pursue me?  
 This shalt thou do . . . a green bough shalt thou sprinkle with pure water; four bricks from the midst of a ruin shalt thou set up;  
 A lamb shalt thou take; with *carbatu* wood shalt thou fill the censer, and thou shalt set fire (thereto); sweet scented woods, some *upunta* plant and some cypress wood,  
 Shalt thou keep up; a drink offering shalt thou offer, but thou shalt not bow thyself down. This incantation before the goddess Ishtar  
 Three times shalt thou recite . . . and thou shalt not look behind thee.  
 O exalted Ishtar, that givest light unto the four quarters of the world."

But the greatest of all hymns handed down to us from Babylonian and Assyrian religious literature is an address to Shamash:

"The mighty mountains are filled with thy glance,  
 Thy holiness fills and overpowers all lands,  
 Thou dost reach the mountains, dost overlook the earth;  
 At the uttermost points of earth, in the midst of heaven,  
 thou dost move,  
 The inhabitants of the whole earth thou dost watch over,



All that Ea, the king, the prince, has created thou dost  
watch over,

All created beings thou dost shepherd together.

Thou art the shepherd of all above and below,

Thou dost march in order over heaven's course,

To lighten the earth dost thou come daily.

The waters, the sea, the mountains, the earth, the heaven,

How . . . orderly dost thou come daily,

Among all the Igigi there is not that giveth rest, but thee;

Among all the gods of the Universe, there is none that  
exceeds thee.

At thy rising all the gods of the lands assemble together.

Who plans evil—his horn thou dost destroy,

Whoever in fixing boundaries annuls rights.

The unjust judge thou restrainest with force.

Whoever accepts a bribe, who does not judge justly—on him  
thou imposest sin.

But he who does not accept a bribe, who has a care for the  
oppressed,

To him Shamash is gracious, his life he prolongs.

The judge who renders a just decision

Shall end in a palace, the place of princes shall be his  
dwelling.

The seed of those who act unjustly shall not flourish.

What their mouth declares in thy presence

Thou shalt burn it up, what they purpose wilt thou annul.

Thou knowest their transgressions; the declaration of the  
wicked thou dost cast aside.

Every one wherever he may be is in thy care.

Thou directest their judgments, the imprisoned dost thou  
liberate.

Thou hearest, O Shamash, petition, prayer, and appeal,

Humility, prostration, petitioning, and reverence.

With loud voice the unfortunate one cries to thee.

The weak, the exhausted, the oppressed, the lowly,

Mother, wife, maid appeal to thee.

He who is removed from his family, he that dwelleth far  
from his city."



There are other beautiful hymns extant which show the extent to which the sense of the reality of the gods had penetrated into the thoughts of the people. They do credit to Babylonian and Assyrian piety, and, though they are very sadly outnumbered by magical compositions, they are sufficient evidence of the vitality of religious and moral thinking among these ancient people.

The most popular Babylonian and Assyrian feast was that of the New Year. It was called the Zagmug, and was celebrated, at first, on the first day of Nisan, at the end of the spring equinox in honour of Tammuz. Later it was connected with the worship of Marduk, and was celebrated with great pomp. There was a great procession, during which the image of Marduk was borne in a ship-car, accompanied by images of other gods. It then extended from the first to the tenth of Nisan, and on the eighth, Marduk proceeded out of E-Sagilla to celebrate his marriage with Sarpanit. During the great festival there was a solemn conclave of all the gods, in the presence of Marduk to determine the destinies of the New Year. Religious ceremonies, of course, held the chief place, in which hymns were sung, incantations were chanted, and prayers were offered.

Another great festival was the Shapattum or Shabatum—a feast of the full-moon, celebrated on the fifteenth day of each month. It was a day of pacification. It is to be differentiated from a festival which took place on the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, twenty-eighth, and nineteenth of each month. This

latter was called by the Babylonians the Uhulgallum, and the days on which it was celebrated were evil days, or times of taboo. It has been confused with the Shapattum, because of the fact that it was connected with the phases of the moon, and was, therefore, a moon-festival; and, secondly, because the Hebrew word Sabbath has been connected with the same days of the month—even with the nineteenth day, since that is seven weeks of days from the first day of the preceding month—and is itself probably related in etymology with the Babylonian Shapattum. There were many other feast days, such as: the feast of Tammuz, at the summer solstice, in the month of Tammuz; the Ishtar feast, in the month of Ab, a counterpart of the Tammuz feast; the feast of Nubattu, on the third, seventh, and sixteenth of each month, celebrating the marriage of Marduk and Sarpanit; the Abab feast of Nabu, on the fourth, eighth, and seventeenth of each month; the feast of Sin and Shamash, on the twentieth; that of Shamash and Ramman on the twenty-third; of Enegal and Ninegal on the twenty-fourth; of Gur on the twenty-seventh; the Bubbulu feast of Nergal on the twenty-eighth; a special feast of Shamash on the seventh of Nisan, and on the fourth of Iyyar, the festival of the marriage of Nabu and Tashmit; the Akitu moon-feast, on the seventeenth of Sivan; and another Shamash feast, on the fifteenth of Adar. In short, festival days were as numerous as they used to be in imperial Russia, spring and harvest festivals being the most numerous and popular. They

are evidence of the deep religious character of the people, and of their sense of dependence upon the gods, for the feasts were all religious.

The temples were the holiest spots of all the earth to the Babylonians and Assyrians. They were the home and abode of the presence of the gods. By rite and symbol, by decoration and image, the sign was given everywhere in them that the gods were there. The architecture and decoration, the mysterious lights and shadows of the holy of holies, were not what made its awfulness. It was that the gods were there. There they shone in all their glory. There they declared their will. There they forgave sins. There they bestowed their blessings. There they gave their commandments. The gods were known there as they were known nowhere else; and it was that supremely manifested presence of the gods there, which made the temples, as no other places on earth could be, sanctuaries and homes of the mighty gods. And these sanctuaries were to be found in all parts of the land.

In the very earliest times a mere stone or altar, or image, could constitute a temple, or even a room in a tent. But as time passed, a special room or tent or hut was set apart for the worship of the gods, in which was set up an image of the special god worshipped. The spot where the image was set up was the "holy of holies", to which only kings and priests had access. Connected with the "holy of holies", in later times, was a long hall or court for worshippers, and a second court where business transactions were

carried on. Grouped around these two courts were schools, archive rooms, and priest's apartments. The most conspicuous part of a Babylonian and Assyrian temple of later times was a large brick tower, consisting of from two to seven super-imposed stages, about one hundred and fifty feet high. This tower was called a *zikkurat*, and had a shrine at the top, and a winding ascent leading from bottom to top.

Temples were numerous. Every city-god had his chief sanctuary, at his special seat of worship. Sometimes there were as many as thirteen temples in the same city, as at Lagash, but all stood within the sacred area of the city-god. The temple was the center of commercial, social, and intellectual life. There the gods were worshipped, the law was dispensed, and goods were bought and sold.

The impression made by these great temples was lasting upon foreigners as well as upon the natives. The particular type of temple which we speak of as Babylonian was Sumerian in origin and arose among a mountain-people. The *zikkurat* represented the mountain where the god's shrine was located, and the shrine at its top retained the memory of the mountain shrines of the early Sumerian people. In this connection it is interesting to note that the temple at Nippur, a Sumerian settlement, was called E-kur, "mountain house". The remembrance of the Babylonian *zikkurats* reflected itself in the Hebrew story of the Tower of Babel. Nor did it stop there, for it inspired the Mohammedan minaret, and Christian campanile and tower.

What we have been so far thinking of in connection with the idea of mediation in Babylonian and Assyrian religious thought is the official religion, the religion of the kings and priests and rulers. But while the masses of the people were related to the official religion in the closest possible way, yet there were many and various forms of religious expression, which were very popular at all times, and which held a tight grip upon the people. For instance, magic, though finding a place in the official cult, had endeared itself to the masses of the people in their earnest and determined effort to control the demons and to influence the gods. It is manifestly hard to know where religion ends and magic begins, but it may be stated, as a working hypothesis, that magic is an attempt to control the gods, while religion appeals to them. Consequently, magic is to be found wherever there is a firm belief in the existence of minor deities or demons, for men rarely presume to control the great gods, while their only dealing with demons is to try to overpower them and to use them. Babylonian and Assyrian magic consisted in attempts to control and use unseen demoniac powers, rarely to coerce the great gods. Their conception of sin, as a state of bodily disorder, arising from demoniac possession, led them to be deeply concerned with any power that could control the source of sin.

Various were the rites in seeking to control the cause of sin and sickness. In studying these rites we must not mistake the reality for the symbol. A rite is of value either as a symbol of something or as

a means of something. Laughter is the symbol of joy, but as we laugh our laughter reacts upon the joy and heightens it. A rite is a symbol of some religious belief, and as we practise it the religious belief becomes more and more intensified. The rites practised in freeing from demoniac possessions were useful only as they symbolized the desired relief from unwholesome and sinful conditions. They were worthless in themselves, and merely temporary institutions. No doubt many, perhaps most, Babylonians and Assyrians failed to see beyond the symbol, but we can trust the genius of any religion to be able to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials. The essential was to be free from sickness and sin, the transitory symbol was the rite performed in attaining that end.

The rite of exorcism was performed in order to deliver from the power of demons. It was a symbolic ritual, in which fire and water played a prominent part. Images of the demons, whose expulsion was sought, were made of clay, or pitch, or wax, and were cast into fire to be destroyed. Or, in the case of the water ritual, the person to be delivered was sprinkled with pure water mingled with aromatic woods, which resulted in the desired deliverance. Usually the two acts, the use of fire and water, were combined. For just as the sun rose from out the primeval watery abyss, so the two elements of fire and water were effective, when used in connection with the power of water and light deities, such as Ea and Marduk, who were the patrons of exorcism

*par excellence*, Ea the water-god, and Marduk the solar-deity. The ceremony was called the *ashapu*, and was usually held on the bank of a river. Many other minor points of ritual were added to the rite from time to time, such as the use of amulets, the chanting of magic formulae, symbolic gestures, and burning of different objects.

Exorcism was used not only in case of individual sin and suffering, but also whenever a temple was to be erected or the statue of a god to be dedicated. There developed an extensive incantation literature, consisting of magical poems to be used on all kinds of special occasions. Some of the most important collections of such texts are: the Maqlu ("burning") and the Shurpu ("burning") series, the Labartu (name of a demon) and the Tiu ("headache") texts.

Magic and exorcism are related, both expressing man's relationship to demons. Magic seeks to control them, and exorcism attempts to expell them. They are man's means of defending himself against demons and evil spirits.

But man not only desires to strengthen himself against demoniac influence; he also feels the need of learning the will of the gods. This need expressed itself, among the Babylonians and Assyrians, in very definite religious rites, such as divination and sooth-saying, the most elaborate being the former.

Divination is a desire and attempt to know the future, which can best be accomplished by learning the will of the gods, who hold the destinies in their power. The officer in charge of all acts of divination



was the priest, and the most common ritual of divination was the inspection of the liver of a sacrificial sheep. As we have already learned, gods, men, and animals were all related. Now the seat of life was the blood, and the bloodiest organ is the liver, which was therefore thought to be the specific seat of the soul. When an animal was sacrificed it became identical with the gods, and its liver the mirror of the gods. The sheep was the typical sacrificial animal, its soul or life was located in its liver, and therein was reflected the soul or life of the gods.

It was the business of the divining priest, or *baru*, to inspect the liver, and to make decisions. On the basis of observations as to its shape, size, and other conditions of the different lobes and ducts of the liver, decisions as to the will and intention of the gods were made. The ceremony of "liver inspecting", a phrase which became the regular term for divination, became quite elaborate. The officiating priest was obliged to perform introductory lustrations for himself and for those assisting, with anointings. Special garments had to be worn, and special prayers were offered to Shamash, or Shamash and Adad; Shamash being the god of divination *par excellence*. The sacrificial sheep had to be without blemish.

The oldest form of divination, however, consisted in the pouring of oil upon water or water upon oil, and watching its movements; or the observation of the flight of birds; or the interpretation of dreams. But liver divination can be traced back as early as the first Sargon, about 2650 B. C., and it lasted till



the latest times. It was passed on to the Hittites, who in turn handed it on to the Etruscans, from whom the Romans learned it, with variations, using the heart as well.

Another form of divination consisted in the observation of abnormal phenomena in the life of man, or in that of animals; another in the interpretation of dreams; and still another in the shooting of arrows.

But next in importance to divination by liver observation was what has been called astrology, an observation of the heavenly bodies. Priestly scholars had developed a theory that this world is an exact duplicate or reflexion of the world of the gods. All phenomena and events in this world correspond to heavenly phenomena and events. In heaven the will of the gods is expressed, and if man can read the will of the gods in the heavens he will consequently know what is happening and what will happen in this world. In the heavens the stars play the chief part in the representation of the god's will, and therefore the study of the stars, and of other heavenly bodies, became the divine science. This has been called astrology.

The science cannot be traced much earlier than the First Babylonian Dynasty, although the system was perfected about 2000 B. C. Then the heavenly bodies were associated with the great gods of the Babylonian pantheon. Shamash was the sun, Sin was the moon, Ishtar was Venus, Marduk was Jupiter, Ninib was Saturn, Nabu was Mercury, and Nergal was Mars. The chief of these gods was Sin, "the Lord of Wis-

dom" (En-zu). The *baru*-priests observed eclipses, and all other heavenly phenomena, and interpreted them in terms of divine intention. This means of divination became highly developed. Other stars besides the planets were studied and their peculiarities noted. Constellations were traced along the ecliptic, and the twelve signs of the zodiac were marked. The first stars to be identified by the Babylonians were Jupiter and Venus, the former because of its brilliancy, and the latter because of its occurrence as an evening star one part of the year and as a morning star during the other part. It was left to Greek astrologers to map out the heavens to correspond to the lands, mountains, seas, and rivers of the earth, but the Babylonians had begun the study.

Babylonian astrology had very little to do with the individual. Its interests centred on affairs of state. Individual concerns were served by the simpler forms of divination such as the observation of abnormal animal and human phenomena, or by the observation of phenomena in nature, and by the interpretation of dreams. The decline of astrology set in at the close of the Assyrian period, when it began to pass out of the astrological stage into the stage of astronomy.

There were other means, public as well as private, which were devised in the attempt to come into relationship with the gods. Oracles were granted by the priests, especially after the seventh century; pilgrimages were made to learn the will of certain important deities, as when Ashurbanipal journeyed to Arbela

to consult Ishtar; and individuals claimed the power of prophetic insight into the ways of the gods. But whatever means were adopted the officiating person was a priest. As a representative of the king, at least in early thought, he developed into the standard mediator in all matters that involved the gods and men. The means and modes of his mediation were numerous and varied, but the central idea was that man's happiness and success always depend upon the will of the gods, upon the relationship between gods and men, and upon the success with which mediation was negotiated. This idea is, and has always been, practically universal. It is the heart and core of all religion, and the essence and power of Christianity.

## V

### THE IDEA OF THE FUTURE IN BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

Every true life has a goal to which it is always looking forward. A life cannot be really considered as having begun to live until that far-off city in which its destiny awaits it, where its work is to be done, where its problem is to be solved, begins to draw the life towards itself, and the life begins to know and to own the summons. Very strange is this quality of human nature which decrees that unless a man feels a future before him he does not live completely in the present. Mankind has grown so used to it that he does not realize how strange it is. It seems to be necessary. But the lower natures, the beasts, do not seem to have anything like it. And one can easily picture to one's self a human nature which might have developed in such a way that it never should think about the future, but should get all its inspiration out of the present things. But that is not human nature. Human nature must always

look ahead. The thing which it hopes to become is already a power and decides the things it is.

The Babylonians and Assyrians too had a goal to which they were always looking forward. But it was located primarily in this life. For the next world they cared very little. Nevertheless they did have an idea of an immortal life, though it was very limited, and never developed to any considerable extent. Nor did it exercise any influence upon the manners and ways, the ethics and ideals, of this life.

This limitation in Babylonian and Assyrian outlook was due primarily to a trait common to all early Semitic peoples. The Semites were exceedingly slow in developing an adequate conception of individuality. To them everything centred in the community and in its life. Individual demands and desires were rarely considered. Attention was concentrated on the state. This was also true among the Hebrews. Until the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, no real conception of individual consciousness had developed, and consequently no real conception of the future beyond this world. There was thought in plenty about the nation's future, its destiny among the other nations of the world. But there seemed to be no necessity for a consideration of what happened in a world other than this. A nation does not die with the individual; but new individuals are born that compose the nation of the future. Of course, the individual died, and his death was noted, and there was a general idea as to what happened to him. But very little thought was ever concentrated upon the

subject. The same was true of the Babylonians and Assyrians. Only, whereas the Hebrews developed beyond that stage of thought, the Babylonians and Assyrians never did. And the failure to do so, in spite of their other accomplishments, contributed largely to their final decay and downfall.

At death the body and soul separated. The body was committed to the earth—never cremated except in the earliest period—sometimes in a brick vault; more often it was placed upon a slightly raised platform of bricks, provided with a reed-mat over which was a large cover. Ordinarily, however, the body was placed in a baked-clay coffin in capsule form, or in a coffin made by fitting together two deep bowls, or in a huge vase, or in a coffin of bath-tub shape, of flask-shape, or slipper-shape. The place of burial was usually the temple court. The departed soul, *edimmu*, was spoken of as having gone to its fate. It was thought of as a wind or breath, *napishtu*, and was believed to take a lively interest in the body which it left behind.

In order to guarantee rest for the soul, the body had to be cared for by being supplied with food and implements. The soul was thus enabled to continue what was really an earthly existence in the next world. Offerings, *anag*, were made for the repose of the soul. They were either burned or consumed as a family meal, or both, and in later times the custom of pouring a libation, in connection with the meal, was common.

The departed soul continued to live in a conscious

or semi-conscious state, in a life inferior to the present. It was considered a minor deity, *gidim*, and was often propitiated, but was thought to be deprived of all pleasure.

The home of the departed was known by different names, the chief of which was Arallu. Sometimes it was called *Irsit la tari*, "land of no return", but it was also called "the mountain house of the dead", the "vast city", the "prison house", and the "house of Tammuz". The Poem of Ishtar's descent into Arallu furnishes us with the most complete account of what the abode of the future was like. It was a large dark cavern under the surface of the earth, full of dust, where souls passed a miserable existence of inactivity and gloom, and subsisted on dust. The approach to it was in the western region of the earth, where seven gates guarded by sentinels gave entrance.

The ruler of the realm of the dead was the goddess Ereshkigal, also called Allatu. The god Nergal descended into Arallu and married Ereshkigal. Being a god of pestilence and death, identified later with Mars, his cult centre, Kutha, became a designation of Arallu. Ishtar was also associated with Arallu, which she visited in order to restore her lover Tammuz. Nergal and his consort employed demons as their messengers, the chief being Belit-seri and Namtaru.

Ishtar's "descent into Arallu" is probably a poetic version of an old vegetation myth, the disappearance of Ishtar being the death of nature, when all growth on earth ceased. But it throws interesting light upon

the popular conception of Arallu. At every one of the seven gates, Ishtar was compelled to part with an article of clothing until she appeared naked before Ereshkigal, who ordered her servant Namtaru to imprison the goddess. Ea interposed on behalf of Ishtar, whereupon Ereshkigal commands Namtaru to sprinkle Ishtar with "water of life" and to release her. Ishtar departs and receives her clothes as she passes each of the seven gates.

There is also an echo in Babylonian literature of an "Island of the Blest", situated at the confluence of the streams, where Utnapishtim and his wife were led, after the flood, but it seems to have been only for special individuals. There is, however, nothing definitely known about the future of such heroes. Enkidu (or Eabani) also goes to Arallu, but when he appears to his friend Gilgamesh he has no definite information to impart, other than that Etana and Ereshkigal were there.

To the Babylonians and Assyrians, death was an unmitigated evil, with which no ethical considerations were connected. Once a soul departed to Arallu, his fate was unalterable and permanent. There was no belief in transmigration or resurrection. There is only one instance of a soul rising from Arallu, besides the goddess Ishtar, and that was Enkidu; yet he did not gain deliverance, but, like the shade of Samuel, returned again.

Such was the future of the Babylonians and Assyrians. There was no "Kingdom of God" in the future for them. Their best vision was confined to



this world, and that was not very inspiring. The Hebrew dream of a Messianic Kingdom, of a city of God, was unknown to them. When we think of the dreariness in outlook of the Babylonians and Assyrians, of the absence of that power which could have consecrated their nationalism, their patriotism, their wealth, their glory, and their individual sacrifices, it is a real wonder that they ever accomplished anything. They had no dream of an ideal spiritual king and an ideal spiritual nation to realize; they were thrown back upon their native, natural will to live, for their inspiration. And when we contemplate the great things they accomplished, their art and architecture, their military grandeur and their mighty empire, their literature and science, their deep sense of piety and their fine moral distinctions, we are surprised at any limitations to the dream of more favoured nations, who have had all the stimulus and inspiration of a glorious spiritual future, a moral and religious city and kingdom of God.

## VI

### THE IDEA OF MORALITY IN BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

Many hundreds of years ago a Hebrew poet wrote, "In thy light we shall see light". The poet saw men all around him running hither and thither seeking light. The poet sympathized with them, for he too thought light the most precious thing in the world. But he saw a great fallacy in the search for light of his time. Men appeared to be questioning this thing and that thing, as if the secret of its being, its power to be understood and comprehended, the light with which it ought to shine, were something it carried in itself. He declared this to be wrong. To him everything is comprehensible and capable of being understood only as it exists within the great enfolding presence of God. To him it is only in their relations to the perfect nature that all other natures can become intelligible. Only within the elements where they belong, only as they are held inside the atmosphere of larger natures to which they bear essential and

sacred relationships, can the finest and truest natures of many things be understood. The beauty of the flower or the majesty of the mountain can only truly be seen in the radiance of the glowing sun.

When we turn to study Babylonian and Assyrian morals, it must be held inside the atmosphere of Babylonian and Assyrian life and customs. We must learn to judge the Babylonians and Assyrians in the light of their own time. Their heredity, environment, and social traditions must limit our decisions. We must not forget that they lived many hundreds of years before the rise of Christianity. It is only in the light of their time that we can hope to cast light upon their moral realities and ideals.

The origin of moral ideas reaches back into prehistoric times. The earliest historic man habitually differentiates between good and bad. His "good" and "bad" doubtless differed from ours, having been probably more confined and narrower. We say that "good" is that which favours human progress, and "evil" that which impedes it. But the Babylonians and Assyrians, because of their known piety, would probably have defined "good" as that which is pleasing to the gods and "evil" as that which incites the anger of the gods. "Good" and "evil" may originally have been purely ritual and ceremonial, but in historic times we shall find that, although ritual right and wrong still prevailed to a certain extent, a positive moral distinction was made. Our own moral distinctions are based upon what we consider to be the will of God and upon what has become customary.

The same is true of Babylonian and Assyrian morals. What their gods willed was right, what they disapproved was wrong; what was customary was right, and what was not customary was wrong.

Of course the gods will what we *think* they will. We think God wills justice, righteousness, purity, etc. The Babylonians and Assyrians thought he willed the same, though their idea of justice, purity, and righteousness may have been different from what ours is. They may have conceived sin, for example, in a more ceremonial way than we, and may have considered it and "sickness" to be equivalent. This we must take into consideration in our evaluation of Babylonian and Assyrian morals.

Every human act is done for some end or purpose. The end is always regarded by the agent in the light of something good. If evil be done, it is done as leading to good, or as bound up with good, or as itself being good for the doer under the circumstances. The standard of moral judgment is that which is considered good or bad, wrong or right. But what is considered good or bad, wrong or right, depends upon people and time. To the Babylonians and Assyrians, human acts were right or wrong, good or bad, not according as they were useful or hurtful, nor yet according as their consequences made for or against the end of social happiness, but according as they were pleasing or displeasing to the gods. The Babylonians and Assyrians aimed at material blessings, prosperity, success in war and in private undertakings; but they also aimed at tranquility of soul; and

most of all their greatest concern was to please the gods.

In examining the subject matter of Babylonian and Assyrian morals, allowance must be made for a wide gap between the ideal and the real. We must be careful not to confuse what were actual practices with what were merely ideals, although the ideals will be valuable as an indication of what the Babylonians and Assyrians knew to be best and of what they tried to attain.

In this gap between the ideal and the real, man is always standing; between their visions and tasks all men are standing always. For every man has visions, glimpses clearer or duller, now bright and beautiful, now clouded and obscure, of what is absolutely and abstractly true; and every man also has pressing on him the warm, clear lives of fellow men. There is the world of ideals, of truths, on one side, and there is the world of reality, of men, upon the other. Between the two stands man; and these two worlds, if man is what he ought to be, meet through his nature.

In attempting to gain an idea of the morals of any people or age a standard of judgment must be assumed. The most convenient criterion is the moral standard of our own age. By using this standard of judgment we can compare the moral ideas of any people or age with those of our own age, and decide whether they were higher or lower than ours. We may thus commend or condemn the morals of the people or age under consideration. But this criterion

cannot be used to commend or condemn the morals of any individual of another people or age than our own. The individual must be commended or condemned on the basis of the morals of his own times—as to whether he has been true or false to the moral ideals of his own people and time.

In order to compare the morals of the Babylonians and Assyrians with our own, our first task will be to find what their moral ideas were, and what was the content of their moral ideas. We shall, therefore, try to discover their Moral Ideals, their idea of Moral Evil, their moral determinants, whether they were conscious of a freedom of will or not, and what their Moral Sanctions were.

The Babylonians and Assyrians always ascribed the best they knew to their gods. If we can learn what that was we shall be in a position to state what their moral ideals were. The chief endeavour of the Babylonians and Assyrians was to please their gods, and in order to do that it was necessary that they should know what the will of the gods was. The Babylonians and Assyrians saw the will of the gods in the customs and laws of their time, for the authorship of all law and precedent was ascribed to the gods. To obey the gods, then, was to be obedient to the custom and law of the time. The Law, therefore, was the moral ideal.

But what did Babylonian and Assyrian law consist in, or by what was it characterized? It consisted in justice, righteousness, truthfulness, etc. But what was the content of justice, righteousness, truthfulness,

ness, etc.? Their content must necessarily have depended upon the customs and legal decisions of those times. The customs and legal decisions of the times, then, will define the moral ideals of the Babylonians and Assyrians.

We shall, therefore, examine the customs and legal decisions of the family, social, international, transcendental, and personal life of the Babylonians and Assyrians in order to determine what the content of their moral ideals was. And we shall begin by noting what ideals they ascribed to their gods.

The Babylonian and Assyrian referred to his god as the "sovereign of justice", the "perfect" one, the lord of "righteous" command; with him they associated such qualities as faithfulness, purity, goodness, and uprightness; and he was considered the punisher of the wicked. The deities were particularly associated with law both as originators and as administrators. They possessed law as their own, and there was a tendency to ascribe all law to them. As a rule, whatever was ascribed to the gods was "perfect", "righteous", and "just". Therefore, all law was just, because it belonged to and came from the gods. The numerous legal contracts, representing the Babylonian and Assyrian periods, illustrate the important rôle which law played in the every-day life of these peoples. The law of the gods was, in short, the moral ideal of the people. It was their standard of all "perfection" and "justice".

Now, the just law of the gods, as the moral ideal, consisted in speaking the truth, which was often

guaranteed by an oath, especially in contracts. The many Babylonian and Assyrian contracts show how great was the dependence upon a promise, which the contracting parties accepted as true. The moral ideal consisted also in what was right, which likewise was guaranteed by an oath, usually in the name of the gods; *e. g.*, a true servant is he who does what is right or good. It consisted in the recognition of honesty; *e. g.*, the home-transgressor is rewarded for his honesty in owning his wrong. It consisted in the love of justice, and the abhorrence of wickedness.

But did the Babylonians mean the same thing by *ka-gi-na*, *zi*, *dug*, etc., as we mean by "to speak justice", "righteousness", "good", etc.? Ideally, they did. Gudea tells us that during a religious festival in his time the maid was equal to her mistress, the master and the slave consorted together, the powerful and humble lay down side by side, the rich man did not wrong the orphan, the strong did not oppress the widow, and the sun shone justice and Babbar trod injustice under foot. In general, the ideal required that law be the same for the poor as for the rich.

The actual laws and customs of the times, however, will teach us how near in practice the Babylonians and Assyrians really approached this ideal. Their actual practice in these matters as compared with our own will determine their moral status as a people.

It is true that we have evidence in inscriptions that there was a great deal of freedom and real harmony, *e. g.*, in family life, and that the husband showed a real sense of duty even to a divorced wife—which,



however, may have been more the result of the presence of law—but it is evident that clemency was the father's prerogative. He could divorce his wife at will, and inflict the severest punishments upon the members of his family. In short, the father of a family had rights which no one else possessed.

To a certain extent the mother shared the father's authority and rights. Children owed obedience to her as well as to the father, and she, as well as the father, had the power of disinheritance. Both parents shared the family responsibilities. They were obliged to care for their children, and care for orphans was always demanded.

On the other hand, the power of the father always tended to be restricted by legal decisions, which became established law, *e. g.*, marriage was a legal contract; the right of the father to sell wife, son, or daughter was in time restricted to a sale which was valid only for three years; the wife's definite rights increased, *e. g.*, a man could not take a concubine without a valid excuse; a slave wife could not be sold if she bore children; and children had legal property rights. The father's control over servants was even greater than that over his wife and children, yet servants had their rights, and were treated in such a way that in turn they often showed real respect for their master.

In Babylonia and Assyria, as in all society, efforts were continually made to bring about reforms in family law, but down to the end of Babylonian and Assyrian civilization the head of the family enjoyed

peculiar rights—rights which would be called unjust when judged by the standard of modern family customs.

In social life, the king was always revered by his subjects; he was the righteous shepherd of his people, and regulated all decisions; he was full of wisdom and devotion, and by him, as the standard of justice, as well as by the gods, oaths were sworn. The ideal king was not extortionate, and took care that taxes were as light as possible; and he was merciful in battle. It was a common practice to make votive offerings for a ruler—a practice which showed real devotion to the king.

The relation between individuals demands good deeds, truthfulness, justice, and mercy. The relation of the individual to established law was that of obedience, for the established law was meant to be just, being the gift of the just gods; nor should the just decisions of the gods ever be changed.

The Babylonians and Assyrians had a keen sense of property rights, and it was here that their sense of legal justice was most highly developed. Agreements were made in all property transactions and contracts were duly drawn up in legal form, and sworn to by the name of the gods and that of the king before witnesses in the presence of proper legal officials. *E. g.*, law protected the owner or tenant from any unfair treatment. The Babylonians and Assyrians were very painstaking and exact in all business affairs, and preserved painstaking inventories of all details. Receipts were given and always

acknowledged in a regular legal fashion. The moral ideal in business life, therefore, was strict justice, truthfulness, and honesty.

Free labourers were hired in a legal way and had their definite rights, and salaries were paid according to a legal scale at set times. Even the king felt keenly his responsibility to the labouring class. Slaves, however, were not treated as freemen, but were considered the property of their master. Slaves were bought and sold just like cattle. Yet they were supposed to be morally truthful and were expected to take an oath and to act as witnesses; and they had the right to appear in a lawsuit in their own favour. They also had a certain independence, for they could contract marriage with women in the service of other masters, and could dispose of the property of their masters. The more humane rulers, such as Urukagina, from time to time tried to establish as much of liberty to all men as possible, but slavery was always the rule.

The Babylonians and Assyrians made repeated efforts to better social conditions, as the reforms in the reign of Urukagina show. He restored sacred lands that had been taken by a former king, reduced the number of unnecessary secular officials, deposed officials condemned for bribery, reduced the scale of exorbitant priestly fees, punished theft, and put a stop to forced labor.

Peace was the international and moral ideal, and many treaties were made to obtain it. They were

secured by oath in the name of the gods, and hence were established upon justice and truthfulness. The violation of a treaty was to be punished severely. Yet, in spite of treaties, wars were very frequent; but slaughter was excused as having been commanded by the gods, for wars were holy. Great care was accordingly taken to treat the dead in a proper manner.

The transcendental moral ideal of the Babylonians and Assyrians may be said to have been piety. Their gods were holy, righteous, just, truthful, pure, good, perfect, compassionate, merciful, mighty; and the right attitude towards such beings was one of obedience, love, and worship. The state as a whole recognized these obligations, as did also the individual. The gods were not only the protectors of the just, but they were also the punishers of the wicked. The temples and shrines of the gods were always thronged with devout worshippers, and the gods were the source of protection, and by their oracles their worshippers were guided.

The king's relation to the gods was of a special nature, for his distant ancestors were the very sons of the gods, and each king loved to call himself the son of his god or goddess. Moreover, they were the prophets of the gods, the intermediary between them and mankind. They were also the chief priests, and offered sacrifices and gifts for themselves and people to the gods. All the king's power was a gift from the gods, and the gods chose him and crowned him, and in return the king built temples, groves, canals, statues, shrines, etc., and dedicated them to his god.

The kings were often considered sinless, because of their devotion to the gods and to the welfare of their people.

The individual's relation to the deity was that of true obedience and pious reverence. His true attitude was "to cast down the face" before his god. Although he feared his god, he also had absolute confidence in him, as the many Babylonian and Assyrian names, expressive of this sentiment, would show. Each person had his own god to whom he especially prayed and from whom he received blessings, but all the gods were the object of personal love, reverence, and adoration.

Truth may be said to have been the personal moral ideal of the Babylonians and Assyrians. Its association in the mind of these people with justice is apparent, and it may owe its great development to their keen sense of justice. Next to veracity is piety which is so characteristic of the Babylonian and Assyrian individual, and here again the idea is wrapped up with that of justice which belongs in essence to the gods. Finally, obedience to the gods was a universal ideal, and this again is intimately associated with the idea of justice. The Babylonian and Assyrian, indeed, was most decidedly a law-abiding individual. The righteous man is always he who is true, pious, and obedient; he also was brave, but that was not an essential. The evil man was always despised and subject to malediction and punishment.

Nor is the moral ideal an external one, as might

be expected from an ancient people. The Babylonians and Assyrians, perhaps, laid a great deal of stress upon external requirements in religious matters, but their moral ideal is decidedly an internal and high one. The law must be obeyed not merely (although, perhaps, primarily) because the gods gave it, but in order that the heart may feel satisfaction. The word *azag*, meaning "clean", though often used in a way which would appear to indicate an external or ritual idea of "cleanness", is nevertheless often used in an internal and moral way. The Babylonians and Assyrians developed a keen sense of truth and obedience, and their piety sprang out of a true love of the gods and of things pertaining to them. They loved to frequent the temple of the gods, not because they were forced to do it, but because of their real inward piety.

The moral ideals of the Babylonians and Assyrians, then, may be said to have been expressed in terms of the just law of the gods, and of obedience to it. The moral attitude necessary to the realization of the ideal was obedience to the gods. The moral ideal in family life consisted in truth, justice, and righteousness; in political or social life it consisted in justice, honesty, righteousness, truth, and mercy; in international life it consisted in peace; in transcendental life in piety, obedience, love, and worship; and in personal life in truth, piety, and obedience.

Thus the moral ideals of the Babylonians and Assyrians consisted in doing the will of their gods. They were their gods' battlements and not their own. Their own battlements were their own desires.

These had to be taken away and annihilated, but the will of the gods was irrevocable.

On the other hand, human battlements gave proof of neglect of the gods. Moral evil was disobedience to the gods, and lack of faith in them. Man's life should have abundant supply for all its needs, should be rich enough, safe enough, strong enough; and yet all this abundance is not to come by or in itself, but is to be man's portion, because he is himself part and parcel of the divine life, held closely and constantly upon the bosom of the life of the gods. Man does not carry his sufficiency in himself; it is to be found in the gods. The opposite of all this is impiety, lack of faith, disobedience of the law of the gods, moral sin.

Moral evil was primarily regarded as consisting in the transgression of the law of the gods. The law of the gods was seen in the customs of the times as well as in actual codified law. Babylonian and Assyrian family custom or law was very severe upon sexual impurity; in adultery, both participants were thrown into the river; the punishment for fornication with a betrothed girl was the death of the man; even abduction was punished with death; incest of all forms was hated; and the harlot was considered unholy.

Truthfulness was at a premium, as the many oaths in the name of the gods show. The Babylonians and Assyrians were so exacting in this matter that often the veracity of the witnesses in a lawsuit was questioned and a new process was undertaken to get at



the truth. A lie was not permitted to go unnoticed; and the slanderer was severely dealt with, often by being branded.

Moral sin was believed to offend the gods because it was against their commands, and it was natural that the sinner should ask his gods for their forgiveness. The gods took cognizance of sin, and expected their clients to acknowledge it. One man prayed thus: "My queen knoweth what I have done, oh, conceive compassion; forgive my sins, lift up my countenance"; another says: "Of him who hath sin thou dost receive the petition." The gods were full of mercy.

Social moral evil consisted in oppression and cruelty. Cruelty was undoubtedly common, especially towards enemies, the king being sometimes depicted in the act of driving an arrow into the neck of a captive pleading for mercy, and oppression was common in the reign of unscrupulous kings who levied unjust revenues and heavy tribute. Personal relationship frowned upon stealing, robbery, falsehood, and slander, all of which were severely punished. The suppression of justice and bribery was common, but always condemned. Deceit in business was severely handled. Urukagina's reforms give us a fair idea of the unfavorable condition which sometimes prevailed in Babylonia and Assyria, and also of what a king like Urukagina considered socially wrong. He tells us that before his time in Lagash, excessive taxes were levied, and the taxgatherers billeted themselves on the people; that the *patesi* used to appro-



priate the property of the temple for himself and that the sacred oxen were used to plough the land of the *patesi*; that the priests grew rich at the expense of the temple and plundered the people; that they entered the garden of the people and cut trees and carried off the fruit for themselves; that they used to keep on good terms with the palace by dividing the spoil; that they oppressed the people by confiscating their property; and that they used forced labor and misused the laborers by means of force. These conditions prevailed, but they were reformed by Urukagina, who felt their great injustice. Yet it was certainly thought that sin was not confined to ceremonial, ritual, or external wrong; but was morally conceived; for sin resulted in disgrace.

International moral evil has always been cruelty and it is not surprising to find evidence of such in Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions, though there is not a great deal of it.

The moral evil in Babylonian and Assyrian transcendental life is that which arouses the anger of the gods. It is not clear what that was, but disobedience or irreverence may be assumed. When the deity is vexed, devastation, murder, etc., prevail. Prayer for forgiveness and compassion was then in order.

Personal moral evil consisted in disobedience to the customs and laws of the time.

As already seen, punishments were often very severe, especially in the case of sexual sins. This may indicate a rather external, material, or ritual idea of the conception of sin. For example, a man was put

to death for committing fornication with a betrothed girl. This may be because such an act would cause a depreciation in the value of the girl in the eyes of her father, who expected to receive the bride price from her future husband. Even adultery is not punished with any such severity. But this is another instance of the relation of the father to the family, and the law was made or the custom arose with his interests in view. The same is probably the explanation of the severe punishment of an abductor.

The Babylonians and Assyrians believed that suffering always brought its own reward. One suffers what he deserves, and the gods see to it that the sinner is punished by being cursed. Suffering was considered a mental as well as a material thing.

There is no doubt, on the other hand, that sin was not always morally considered. The breaking of a ritual or ceremonial law was often considered quite as blamable as an offence against a moral law. The consecrated woman was punished with death if she ever took part in secular business, because of her ritual holiness, and she evidently was never permitted to bear children to a man who became her husband, for the same reason. The many references to the unconsecrated, and to unclean hands, likewise point to a ritual idea of sin.

As to a theory of the origin of moral evil, there is nothing to be found in Sumerian inscriptions which is equivalent to the Paradise story of the Old Testament or the *yetzer* theory of later Judaism. The interest of the Babylonians and Assyrians was practical

rather than metaphysical. They realized the existence of evil, and assumed, without debate, that it came from the world of spirits which surrounded them. They would not accuse their gods of being the origin of sin; but besides gods there were numerous demons, spiritual and unseen, beings from whom came sickness and death and to whom were ascribed all evil. The "evil eye" was the malevolent glance of the demon.

Moral evil in Babylonia and Assyria consisted primarily in a violation of the customs and laws of the gods and was expressed in sexual sin in family life; in oppression and cruelty, falsehood and injustice, in social life; in cruelty in international life; and perhaps in disobedience and irreverence in transcendental and personal life.

With the idea of a sense of moral evil must go a feeling of free will. Evil cannot be considered blamable unless there is a certain freedom of the will. If a man has no choice but to do evil, he cannot be held accountable for the evil which he has no power to avoid. The Babylonians and Assyrians had a sense of moral evil as distinguished from ritual and ceremonial "wrong" or incorrectness. They differentiated moral right from moral wrong. They felt themselves *morally* responsible. This their numerous contracts are sufficient to show. "The house-usurper was cognizant" that what he had done was wrong; and that he had consciously and wilfully done an evil deed.

On the other hand, as in the Old Testament and later Jewish literature, there is evidence in inscrip-

tions to show that the Babylonians and Assyrians believed to a certain extent in predestination. They spoke of the "tablets of fate of the gods", and of one being inscribed into the book of life. In the word *nam-tar-tar-ri-e-ne*, the use of the plural *e-ne* shows that the Sumerians, and following them, the Babylonians and Assyrians, considered the fates to be deities. The gods were believed to have the power of directing the world and each man's destiny was in a broad and general way prescribed by them. This did not, however, prevent them from believing at the same time that each man had the personal power, with the help of the gods, of directing his immediate acts. Nor did they feel any incongruity in these two seemingly opposite ideas. The belief in prayer to the gods assumed a belief in freedom from predetermined destiny.

Moral determinants may be enumerated as, heredity, environment, social tradition, and personal initiative. These forces always condition a people's morals.

Let us, then, examine Babylonian and Assyrian customs in the light of these forces. The family was, we know, patriarchal, at least in historical times. The father was head and owner of the family. He owned wife and child just as he did sheep or oxen, and had the legal right to dispose of them. Patriarchal rights were handed on from generation to generation, and though from time to time decisions were made limiting that right, and these decisions gradually became law, yet the patriarchal rights among the Babylonians and Assyrians were to a great extent hereditary. The

environment of society was such that it tended to accentuate the right of the *pater familias*. The government was monarchical, each city at first having its own prince or king. The family was a government in miniature, and the necessity of the preservation of family integrity demanded a leader and head in which all family life and forces could centre. That leader was necessarily the strong one of the family; as a rule, the father.

Every society is conditioned *ab extra* by an environment or atmosphere which we call social tradition, and in the case of the Babylonians and Assyrians this further tended to emphasize the established nature of the family as a group of individuals looking to the father as head.

There were, however, always those stronger persons who possessed sufficient force of character to disregard by personal initiative certain social customs, and this is how we account for certain definite progressive strides in ancient civilization. It likewise explains how that in Babylonian and Assyrian society the father of the family was often forced to recognize the rights of inferior members of the family. But heredity, environment, and social tradition were so strong in the family life that to the end the father remained virtually dictator of family affairs, and personal initiative never played much of a rôle.

The same may be said of the effects of heredity, environment, social tradition, and personal initiative in social, international, transcendental, and personal life. The actions of a king, or state, or individual,

were conditioned by heredity, even as they were by environment and tradition, and yet there was always a place for personal initiative. These circumstances must always be taken into consideration in the determination of the nature of the morals of any people or age.

There is all through the best and most earnest thought and life of men the vision of a great attainment. That man, the individual man and the universal man, is what he is only in preparation for something far vaster and more perfect than he is—this is the practical doctrine of all earnest and religious men. It appears in all religions—this doctrine of the great attainment, the belief in the lofty something which it is possible for man to become, although no man, purely man, has become it yet.

But though the Babylonians and Assyrians shared with all mankind this lofty ideal, its power as a moral sanction was greatly limited, because of their inability to allow its extension into the idealism of a life beyond the grave. Their moral sanctions, consequently, lacked that driving power, which otherwise would have been realized had they not been foreshortened by the limitations of mere mortal existence.

Moral sanctions or considerations which give force and authority to moral laws may be either external or internal. They may refer to rewards and punishments imposed from without, or to consequences of conduct which arise spontaneously from within. The Babylonians' and Assyrians' respect for the just law of the gods is the nearest approach we find to an in-

ternal moral sanction in their religion. It is true, disobedience to the law called forth punishment, and in that respect, was an external moral sanction, but obedience to the law had become hereditary and traditional and the virtue of keeping the law was perhaps its own reward. The moral ideal was perfection or sinlessness, and that state could be arrived at only through obedience to the law.

The most potent Babylonian and Assyrian moral sanction, however, consisted in rewards and punishments imposed from without by an external authority in the present, that authority being either divine or a constituted legal authority. The gods became angry with the sinful and punished them; and established law provided punishment for the offender.

Unlike the Hebrews there was no appeal to future rewards and punishments in Sumerian thought. The Babylonians and Assyrians believed in the survival of the soul (*edimmu*) in the future, in Arallu, the land of the dead; but Arallu was a "place of desolation". Offerings were made for the dead, but primarily for the purpose of keeping them from harming the living. In the Babylonian and Assyrian conception of life after death, the moral factor was entirely absent. Nor did the gods ever concern themselves with the dead, who lived in a gloomy and silent habitation. What happiness a man may desire must be secured in this life, and hence moral standards were completely adapted to the present needs, without any reference to the future. The future, therefore, did not hold any moral sanction for the Babylonians and the Assyrians



as it did for the Hebrews. It was in this life that moral sanctions were to be found, and they were found chiefly in the fact that the gods demanded obedience to just laws—adherence to moral standards.

In conclusion it may be well to enumerate the main features of Babylonian and Assyrian morals, and to make an estimate of them. In making this estimate we must be careful to distinguish between national and individual morals, for while the morals of a nation may be commended or condemned in comparison with the morals of our own time, individual morals must be judged in the light of the customs of the age of the particular individual under consideration.

Our study of the morals of the Babylonians and of the Assyrians as a nation has revealed certain defects. Their idea of the deity was far inferior to ours, for while they considered the gods to be the source of all justice, truth, righteousness, etc., yet their justice, truth, and righteousness were national and not international. Moreover their gods were conceived in a very anthropomorphic way, and were subject to the need of change and repentance just as men are. In short their moral conception of their gods was a limited one, but very high within these limitations. Again, their idea of the rights and privileges of the head of the family was inferior when considered in the light of the twentieth century, but its limitations were due to the customs and traditions of the time. "Convention is king over all," says Pindar, and according as convention changed, so the



rights of the father were more and more limited. Another defect was noted in connection with the subject of punishment. Many of the punishments regulated by the law were far too harsh in our judgment, but they again were regulated by custom and tradition, for certain punishments which are considered just in the twentieth century may be considered equally harsh in the thirtieth century. The *lex talionis* and capital punishment serve not only to show how comparatively cruel the Babylonians and Assyrians were, but they may also be taken as an indication of the great abhorrence felt by them for certain types of sin. Slavery was another national defect, but that again was in order among all ancient peoples. That the slaves enjoyed certain very definite rights was a step in that direction which finally led to the banishment of slavery; but not till many thousands of years had passed. There were other defects, if we judge these people by our twentieth century standards; *e. g.*, the people apparently had very little share in the government; magic controlled much of the religious life, and sin was likely to be very physically conceived. But here again we must keep in mind the moral determinants of the age, *e. g.*, heredity, environment, and social tradition.

On the other hand, our study has revealed to us much evidence of real moral strength in the character of the Babylonians and Assyrians. We have seen that their moral ideals were very high, and that their practice often very nearly approximated their ideals. The moral ideal in family life, we have seen, was

truth, justice, and righteousness; in political or social life it was justice and righteousness, truth and mercy; in business life it was justice, truthfulness, and honesty; in international life it was peace, established upon justice and truth; in transcendental life it was piety, consisting in obedience, love, and worship; and in personal life it was truth. In short, justice and truth were the great fundamental moral ideals of the Babylonians and Assyrians. Nor was the moral ideal merely external, consisting in a materialistic morality; it was certainly also internal, being persisted in out of a desire for real heartfelt satisfaction.

Their idea of moral evil was a very discriminating one. Moral evil generally consisted in a transgression of the laws of the gods. In family life it consisted chiefly in injustice and immorality; in social and political life, in oppression and cruelty; in international life, in cruelty; in transcendental life, in irreverence; and in personal life, in disobedience. These moral evils were strongly detested and severely punished. In short, moral evil consisted in the violation of the laws and customs of the times, or in other words in the violation of the will of the gods. Sin was often considered ceremonially, but it was certainly also considered from a purely moral point of view.

Moral sanctions have also been considered, and we found that here also there was not lacking a real internal sanction, though the predominating one was external.

The individual Babylonian and Assyrian cannot be judged in the light of the twentieth century. He must be commended or condemned according as he

obeyed or disobeyed the laws of his time. He was, as is every individual of every age, controlled by certain moral determinants, such as heredity, environment, and social tradition. All these must be taken into consideration in our estimation of his morals. We have, accordingly, found that the Babylonian and Assyrian was a truthful, just, and pious individual; he was conscious of a certain amount of free will; he was accustomed to weigh motives and intentions; and yet he felt that his life and destiny were in a way controlled by the gods.

In short, our study of Babylonian and Assyrian morals has led us to believe that as a people they may be said to have been especially characterized by their devotion to justice and truthfulness; and in spite of the presence of much materialism in their social life, and of much regard for ceremonial in their religious life, their moral ideals were singularly high. Judged by a twentieth century standard they were as a nation on a much lower level, generally, than the nations of the Western world. On the other hand, there is nothing to show that the individual Babylonian and Assyrian, judged as he must be by the moral standards of his own time, was anything else than a truthful, just, law-abiding, and pious subject of his king and gods.

As we look back over our study of the religious and moral ideas of the Babylonians and Assyrians, and recall their exalted piety and reverence for their gods, the consciousness of their continual dependence upon them, and the ideals which they ascribed to them; as we recall their doctrine of man and his relationship to

the gods, his dependence upon them, and his effort to emulate them; as we think of the system they had developed to preserve intact a continual communication between themselves and the gods; and especially as we contemplate the height of moral purpose and the depth of moral insight to which they had attained, we can well be puzzled by the barrenness of their faith in the future. Their faith in the gods, in man, in the power of mediation, and in moral goodness, was a great force in their daily life. They seemed to gather living force, wisdom, and faith, out of every experience, and to apply them to this faith in the gods and in man, in mediation, and in morality. But the accumulation of faith stopped short at this point. They were like the peevish and complaining Israelites, who, in spite of Jehovah's care for them in the past, could not believe that he could give bread also, and flesh for his people.

The symmetry of their religious and moral life was destroyed by their lack of faith in the future. They had developed the height of their mystic religious city. Its reach towards the divine had made excellent progress. They had developed its breadth, its outreach laterally. They understood human nature, and had made great strides along the lines of social and national development. They had built up great and reliable institutions of commerce, trade, and law. But the length of their mystic city of religious thought was miserably dwarfed. It practically ended with this life. There was no reaching forward with eagerness to a future life. Their religion remained a

mundane one; their morals did not reckon with the future.

This was the limitation which blighted the Babylonian and Assyrian religion. The debt which the world owes Babylonia and Assyria in science, commerce, art, literature, morality, and especially law, is deep and lasting. The science of astronomy was born in the cradle of Assyrian astrology; the technique of commerce was developed and perfected in the shops and market-places of Babylon and Nineveh, with great merchants, such as the "House of Murashu and Sons"; art, especially of the plastic type, was perfected in Babylonia over two thousand years before Christ; literature had made mighty strides before history in Greece was born; morality seems to have been native in a high form with the earliest Babylonians; and the Code of Hammurapi not only surpassed the laws of Manu and of the Roman Twelve Tables, but antedated them by many hundreds of years. The institutions of Western civilization are permeated through and through with Babylonian and Assyrian culture. We cannot reckon time without doing so in terms of Babylonian mathematics; we cannot make out a receipt without signing it in a Babylonian way; we cannot seal a letter without using an Assyrian patent; we cannot think of the creation of the world or of the catastrophies which the glacial period left in its trail without making use of Babylonian and Assyrian cosmological ideas; we cannot draw up a code of ethics without using Assyrian and Babylonian models; and we cannot draw up a legal

contract, in legal terms, without the use of Babylonian technical phraseology.

No race has more profoundly impressed the world's civilization in these matters than the Babylonians and Assyrians. But their primitive conception of the future became so encrusted, so hardened, that no influences from without were ever able to reach it. Nor was the crust ever broken. That crust finally crippled all religious effort. A religion and morality which had the possibilities of so much within them became diseased at the core with a malady which caused their death. The Babylonian and Assyrian religion is a sad example of a one-sided religion, whose inevitable outcome is decay. Mighty Babylon and Assyria's grandeur have not left themselves without excellent witnesses of their priceless gifts to human endeavour, but their temple of religious insight must always remain a ruin, albeit an interesting, instructive, and grand one.

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